

REPRESENTATIVE MODERN STORIES

Edited by

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PREFACE

THIS selection of short stories is primarily intended for students at the Intermediate stage in Colleges or Higher Secondary Schools in India. It has been specially prepared to suit the changed position of English in college or school curriculum. Half of the stories are steeped in Indian atmosphere and incident, the other half possess a universal interest and will, therefore, not be found distasteful to those for whom they are meant. While in making the selection care has been taken to bring down the stories to the simpler standard required by changed conditions, neither the level of the story nor its style has been allowed to be sacrificed. Among the authors drawn upon for the purpose of selection are some of the greatest names in English literature, excluding Tagore and Mulk Raj Anand, two of the finest story-writers of our own country.

Each story is preceded by a short introduction followed at the end by Suggestions for Further Reading. Suitable notes, general questions and questions on each story have been added at the end of the book. The 'Suggestions', it is hoped, will enlarge the student's mental horizon by stimulating desire for further reading of similar works of the author, and the notes will enable him to understand allusions and uncommon words. The questions are designed to test the general intelligence of the reader.

J. S.

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'A Pair of Mustachios' by Dr Mulk Raj Anand has been reproduced by permission of *The Times of India* from the *Indian Annual* 1948.

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INTRODUCTION

THE short story is of ancient origin, but in its modern form it is quite recent. The tales told in the Buddhist *Jatakas*, the *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*, *The Arabian Nights*, and later on the innumerable versions of these in altered or modified form, the Parables of Christ or the moral Fables of *Hitopadesa*, the *Adventures of Hatim Tai*, or *Quissa Chahar Dervish*; these and the tales culled from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, all speak of the popularity of the short story and the desire on the part of people, old and young, to be beguiled and occasionally instructed by them. Indeed, the great moral teachers like Buddha and Christ realized early that they could convey their great moral teaching better through parable or fable than through a cold dissertation on an abstract theme. But the earlier tales of adventures or the moral tales of religious teachers bear no resemblance whatever to the story cultivated by the modern masters. The earlier story-teller told his tales to transport us to an imaginary world of beauty and charm or because he wanted to drive home some moral truth. Narration by word of mouth became a fine art, especially in the Orient, where in Persia, Arabia and parts of India the story-teller was a professional entertainer. He would spread his carpet, charge a small fee, and beguile the tedium of a long winter night or the hot hours of summer. With the invention of the printing press and the change in times, the professional story-teller has now almost disappeared. In his place, we have a scrupulously trained artist who is a close observer of life, a keen student of character, and a master of style.

How perfect has the art of the short story become will be clear from the stress which its modern originator, Poe, laid on it. 'In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to one pre-established design', he said. But while the short story needs an artist to handle it, there is no limit to its subject matter or to the manner in which it is told. Each artist uses it in a manner different from the other. Tchekhov, the great Russian story-writer, held that 'a story should have neither a beginning nor end', while Mr Ellery Sedgewick, the American critic and writer, holds that 'a story is like a horse race. It is the start and finish that count most'. Jack London declared that it should be 'concrete, to the point, with snap and go and life, crisp and crackling and interesting'. Elizabeth Bowen, one of the greatest short story writers in England today, emphasizes that 'the first necessity of the short story, at the outset, is *necessariness*. The story, that is to say, must spring from an impression or perception pressing enough, acute enough, to have made the writer write'. Thus it is that, as Mr Sedgewick asserts, 'the short story has become all sorts of things, situation, episode, characterization, or narrative—in effect a vehicle for every man's talent'.

On one thing, however, every writer is agreed, namely its shortness. Mr H. G. Wells maintains that a short story could be read in half an hour. The stories of great masters like Poe, O. Henry, Turgenev, Katherine Mansfield, Maupassant, Kipling, and Tchekhov, with very few exceptions, all conform to this rule.

Closely connected with the shortness of the story is the shrinking of detail in the hands of modern writers.

The short story today is told more simply, more economically, and more truthfully. The writer now does not so much describe as suggest. Much unnecessary matter, therefore, which used to find a place in the works of older writers, say a generation ago, is now dispensed with.

As the stories in this selection are widely different they also make a different appeal to different people. Thackeray's 'Sultan Stork' is a burlesque on *The Arabian Nights* and in a satiric vein tries to parody the tales told in that fine collection. To an indiscriminating reader, however, the story will possess a romantic interest, and the parody will be lost on him. Similarly, the subtle humour in Mulk Raj Anand's 'A Pair of Mustachios' may be undiscernible to many who may regard the incident as nothing more than a laughable one. Besides its subtle humour, Anand's story reveals a page out of the book of average Indian life. Between the romanticism of Thackeray's 'Sultan Stork' and the realism of Mulk Raj Anand's 'A Pair of Mustachios' there is a wide gulf. The unreal Princess of Hindostan in Thackeray's tale reminds us of the princesses who figured in the stories told by our grandmothers, while a facet of the peasant life in an Indian village is beautifully mirrored in Anand's story. Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado' is a morbid story, a story which might raise the hair on our head due to the uncanny atmosphere which is woven round it. Of this kind of story Poe was a master. It is a story of passive horror like his 'Pit and the Pendulum'. But there may be many who do not like the extraordinary and the exceptional which Poe fancied, and they may turn away with aversion from his tale. Jim Corbett is not a story writer in the sense in which others are. He is a jungle-roamer

and a tiger-shooter. But no book in recent times has thrilled readers more than *The Man-eaters of Kumaon* from which the story of the killing of The Champawat Man-eater is taken. As a tale of adventure Corbett's book excels, the more so because the adventures told are all true. Tagore's 'Home-Coming' gives a vivid picture of Bengali life, and is told with a simplicity which is remarkable, while Bret Harte in 'The Stolen Cigar Case' reveals that he is a close disciple of Poe, not in his creation of atmosphere or uncanniness but in the handling of details. Like a good journalist he crowds into his story people, humour, movement, colour, and suspense. In 'The Ebony Box' Mr A. E. W. Mason returns to the romantic-realistic tale. No writer, however, approaches de Maupassant in the economy of detail, exquisiteness of style, and charm and grace with which the story is told. Out of a small incident he can weave a story bringing the entire character into bold relief. In *The Diamond Necklace*, which is considered to be one of the greatest short stories in any language, the great French master allows the incident to develop itself, giving the impression that he himself is not interested how it develops. Such a cold and objective detachment and fidelity to a realistic portrayal of every-day life, in this case of a lower middle-class French family, in which grace, charm and wit are all combined, is very rare. And de Maupassant, better than any other short story writer, knows when to stop without being abrupt.

It is necessary to remember that the short story is a *genre* in literature altogether different from the drama or the novel. While it may or may not adopt dialogue, which is essential to the play, it is strictly limited in its scope. It illuminates character by throwing the search-

light, as it were, on one significant incident in a man's life ; drama does the same thing by a process of evolution. We see gradually the character of the individual unfolded before us in the play as scene follows scene. The short story is not a précis of a novel or of an Act of a full-length play either. The purpose of the latter is entirely different. In the novel we have clash of characters, and a slow succession of incidents ; the single Act of a play implies a link in something which precedes or succeeds it. Besides, taken out of it, it looks so abrupt. The short story, on the other hand, is governed by its own laws, and follows its own practice. Great dramatists and great novelists have seldom been great short story writers and vice versa. It would have been as difficult for Poe, Maupassant, or Tchekhov to have written a great novel as it would have been for Dickens and Thackeray to have written a great short story. There are exceptions, of course : Tolstoy, Hardy and Tagore excelled both in the novel as well as in the short story. But in the main the dictum that the short story writer pursues a different method and tries to achieve a different objective is quite true.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), American poet, critic and short story writer, leapt into fame with the publication of the short story 'A MS Found in a Bottle', which won him the Baltimore Visitor Prize in 1833. Then followed a succession of tales of adventures, detective stories and tales of fantasy which established his reputation as the greatest short story writer which America had produced. Among his famous stories are 'The Balloon Hoax', 'The Gold Bug', 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', 'The Pit and the Pendulum', 'The Fall of the House of Usher', and 'The Cask of Amontillado'. Poe holds his reader's imagination by the skill of his narration and the atmosphere he creates. His influence on American and English story writers cannot be overestimated.

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged ; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face,

and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adapted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the Carnival season that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him, 'My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.'

'How?' said he; 'Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the Carnival!'

'I have my doubts,' I replied; 'and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain'

'Amontillado!'

'I have my doubts.'

'Amontillado!'

'And I must satisfy them.'

'Amontillado!'

'As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me——'

'Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.'

'And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.'

'Come, let us go.'

'Whither?'

'To your vaults.'

'My friend, no ; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi——'

'I have no engagement ; come.'

'My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre.'

'Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado.'

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a *roquelaire* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home ; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I

well knew, to ensure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

'The pipe,' said he.

'It is farther on,' said I; but observe the white webwork which gleams from these cavern walls.'

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

'Nitre?' he asked, at length.

'Nitre,' I replied. 'How long have you had that cough?'

'Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh! ugh!'

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

'It is nothing,' he said at last.

'Come,' I said, with decision, 'we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi——'

'Enough,' he said, 'the cough is a mere nothing it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.'

'True—true,' I replied ; 'and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps.'

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

'Drink,' I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled:

'I drink,' he said, 'to the buried that repose around us.'

'And I to your long life.'

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

'These vaults,' he said, 'are extensive.'

'The Montresors,' I replied, 'were a great and numerous family.'

'I forget your arms.'

'A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure ; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are embedded in the heel!'

'And the motto?'

'*Nemo me impune lacessit.*'

'Good!' he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls with piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

The nitre! I said ; 'see it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones.

Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough——'

'It is nothing,' he said; 'let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.'

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

'You do not comprehend?' he said.

'Not I,' I replied.

'Then you are not of the brotherhood.'

'How?'

'You are not of the masons.'

'Yes, yes,' I said; 'yes, yes.'

'You? Impossible! A mason?'

'A mason,' I replied.

'A sign,' he said.

'It is this,' I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire*.

'You jest,' he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. 'But let us proceed to the Amontillado.'

'Be it so,' I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in

the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

'Proceed,' I said; 'herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi——'

'He is an ignoramus,' interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key, I stepped back from the recess.

'Pass your hand,' I said, 'over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once

more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.'

'The Amontillado!' ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

'True,' I replied, 'the Amontillado.'

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials, and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labour and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the

thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

‘Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!’

‘The Amontillado!’ I said.

‘He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘let us be gone.’

‘*For the love of God, Montresor!*’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘for the love of God!’

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply.

I grew impatient. I called aloud—

‘Fortunato!’

No answer. I called again—

‘Fortunato!’

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER READING:

Tales of Mystery and Imagination.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

SULTAN STORK

(Being The One Thousand and Second Night *translated from the Persian by Major G. O'G. Gabagan, H.E.I.C.S.*)

W. M. Thackeray was born at Calcutta on 11 July, 1811. Educated in England, he soon won fame by his contributions to 'Fraser's Magazine'. But it was through his articles in 'Punch' that Thackeray became widely known. Soon after followed a series of brilliant novels—*Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *The History of Henry Esmond* and *The Newcomes*, which made him a great rival of Dickens. Though never quite as popular as Dickens, Thackeray excelled him in style and characterization. As a writer of satire and burlesque he had no equal in his time, and he often delighted in caricaturing people and their works. *Sultan Stork*, written after the manner of *The Arabian Nights*, is a parody of the well-known Arabian tales. His death at the age of 53 in 1863 was widely mourned throughout England.

PART 'THE FIRST

The Magic Powder

AFTER those long wars,' began Scheherazade as soon as her husband had given the accustomed signal, 'after those long wars in Persia, which ended in the destruction of the ancient and monstrous Ghebir, or fire-worship, in that country, and the triumph of our holy religion: for though, my lord, the Persians are Soonies by creed, and not followers of Omar, as every true believer in the Prophet ought to be, nevertheless——

'A truce to your nevertheless, madam,' interrupted the Sultan. 'I want to hear a story, and not a controversy.'

'Well, sir, after the expulsion of the Ahrimanians, King Abdulraman governed Persia worthily until he died after a surfeit of peaches, and left his throne to his son Mushook, or the Beautiful,—a title, by the way,' remarked Scheherazade, blushing, and casting down her lovely eyes, 'which ought at present to belong to Your Majesty.'

Although the Sultan only muttered, 'Stuff and nonsense, get along with you,' it was evident, by the blush in the royal countenance, and the smile which lightened up the black waves of the imperial beard, as a sunbeam does the sea, that His Majesty was pleased, and that the storm was about to disappear. Scheherazade continued :

'Mushook, ascending the throne, passed honourably the first year of his reign in perfecting the work so happily begun by his royal father. He caused a general slaughter of all the Ghebirs in his land to take place, not only of the royal family, but of the common sort ; nor of the latter did there remain any unkilld (if I may coin such a word) or unconverted : and, as to the former, they were extirpated root and branch, with the exception of one most dogged enchanter and Ahrimanian, Ghuzroo by name, who, with his son Ameen-Adawb, managed to escape out of Persia, and fled to India, where still existed some remnants of their miserably superstitious race. But Bombay is a long way from Persia, and at the former place it was that Ghuzroo and his son took refuge, giving themselves up to their diabolical enchantments and worship, and calling themselves King and Prince

of Persia. For them, however, their plans and their pretensions, King Mushook little cared, often singing, in allusion to them, those well-known verses of Hafiz.

"Buldoo says that he is the rightful owner of the rice-field And declares that the lamb is his undisputed property. Brag, O Buldoo, about your rights and your possessions ; But the lamb and rice are his who dines on the pillau."

The Sultan could hardly contain himself for laughing at this admirable epigram, and, without farther interruption, Scheherazade continued her story :

'King Mushook was then firmly established on his throne, and had for his Vizier that famous and worthy statesman, Munsoor ; one of the ugliest and oldest, but also one of the wisest of men, and attached beyond everything to the Mushook dynasty, though his teeth had been knocked out by the royal slipper.'

'And, no doubt, Mushook served him right,' observed the Sultan.

'Though his teeth had been knocked out, yet wisdom and persuasion ever hung on his lips, though one of his eyes, in a fit of royal indignation, had been closed for ever, yet no two eyes in all the empire were as keen as his remaining ball ; he was, in a word, the very best and honestest of Viziers, as fat and merry, too, as he was wise and faithful.

'One day as Shah Mushook was seated after dinner in his beautiful garden-pavilion at Tehran, sick of political affairs, which is no wonder,—sick even of the beautiful houris who had been dancing before him to the sound of lutes and mandolins—tired of the jokes and antics of his buffoons and story-tellers—let me say at once dyspeptic, and in a shocking ill-humour ; old Munsoor (who had already had the royal

pipe and slippers flung half a dozen times at his head), willing by any means to dissipate his master's ill-will, lighted in the outer courts of the palace, as he was hieing disconsolately home, upon an old pedlar-woman, who was displaying her wares to a crowd of wondering persons and palace servants, and making them die with laughing at her jokes.

The Vizier drew near, heard her jokes¹ and examined her wares, which were extraordinarily beautiful, and determined to conduct her into the august presence of the King.

'Mushook was so pleased with her stock in trade, that, like a royal and generous prince, he determined to purchase her whole pack, box, trinkets, and all ; giving her own price for them. So she yielded up her box, only taking out of one of the drawers a little bottle, surrounded by a paper, not much bigger than an ordinary bottle of Macassar oil.'

'Macassar oil! Here's an anachronism!' thought the Sultan. But he suffered his wife to proceed with her tale.

'The old woman was putting this bottle away into her pocket, when the Sultan's eye lighted upon it, and he asked her, in a fury, why she was making off with his property?

'She said she had sold him the whole pack, with the exception of that bottle ; and that it could be of no good to him, as it was only a common old crystal bottle, a family piece, of no sort of use to any but the owner.

'“What is there in the bottle?” exclaimed the keen and astute Vizier.

¹ These, as they have no sort of point except for the Persian scholar, are here entirely omitted.—G. O'G. G.

'At this the old woman blushed as far as her weazen-ed old face could blush, hemmed, ha'd, stuttered, and showed evident signs of confusion. She said it was only a common bottle—that there was nothing in it—that is, only a powder—a little rhubarb.

'“It's poison!” roared Mushook; “I am sure it's poison!” And he forthwith seized the old hag by the throat, and would have strangled her, if the Vizier had not wisely interposed, remarking that if the woman were strangled there could be no means of knowing what the bottle contained.

'“To show you, sire, that it is not poison,” cried the old creature to the King, who by this time had wrenched the bottle out of her pocket, and held it in his hand; “I will take a little of the powder it contains.” Where-upon His Majesty called for a teaspoon, determined to administer the powder to her himself. The chief of the eunuchs brought the teaspoon, the King emptied a little of the powder into it, and bidding the old wretch open her great, black, gaping, ruinous mouth, put a little of the powder on her tongue; when, to his astonishment, and as true as I sit here, her old hooked beak of a nose (which, by way of precaution, he was holding in his fingers) slipped from between them; the old, black tongue, on which he placed the teaspoon, disappeared from under it; and not only the nose and the tongue, but the whole old woman vanished away entirely, and His Majesty stood there with his two hands extended—the one looking as if it pulled an imaginary nose, the other holding an empty teaspoon; and he himself staring wildly at vacancy!

'Scheherazade,' said the Sultan gravely, 'you are drawing the long-bow a little too strongly. In the

thousand and one nights that we have passed together, I have given credit to every syllable you uttered. But this tale about the old woman, my love, is, upon my honour, too monstrous.'

'Not a whit, sir ; and I assure Your Majesty that it is as true as the Koran itself. It is a fact perfectly well authenticated, and written afterwards, by King Mushook's orders, in the Persian annals. The old woman vanished altogether ; the King was left standing there with the bottle and spoon ; the Vizier was dumb with wonder ; and the only thing seen to quit the room was a little canary-bird, that suddenly started up before the King's face, and chirping out "kikiriki", flew out of the open window, skimmed over the ponds and plane trees in the garden, and was last seen wheeling round and round the minaret of the great mosque of Tehran.'

'Mashallah!' exclaimed the Sultan. 'Heaven is great : but I never should have credited the tale, had not you, my love, vouched for it. Go on, madam, and tell us what became of the bottle and Sultan Mushook.'

'Sir, when the King had recovered from his astonishment, he fell, as his custom was, into a fury, and could only be calmed by the arguments and persuasions of the Grand Vizier.

'"It is evident, sire," observed that dignitary, "that the powder which you have just administered possesses some magic property, either to make the persons taking it invisible, or else to cause them to change into the form of some bird or other animal ; and very possibly the canary-bird which so suddenly appeared and disappeared just now, was the very old woman with whom Your Majesty was talking. We can easily see whether the powder creates invisibility, by trying its effects upon

someone—the chief of the eunuchs for example.” And accordingly Hudge Gudge, the chief of the eunuchs, against whom the Vizier had an old grudge, was compelled, with many wry faces, to taste the mixture.

“Thou art so ugly, Hudge Gudge,” exclaimed the Vizier with a grin, “that to render thee invisible will only be conferring a benefit upon thee.” But, strange to say, though the eunuch was made to swallow a large dose, the powder had no sort of effect upon him, and he stood before His Majesty and the Prime Minister as ugly and as visible as ever.

They now thought of looking at the paper in which the bottle was wrapped, and the King, not knowing how to read himself, bade the Grand Vizier explain to him the meaning of the writing which appeared upon the paper.

But the Vizier confessed, after examining the document, that he could not understand it; and though it was presented at the divan that day, to all councillors, mollahs, and men learned in the law, not one of them could understand a syllable of the strange characters written on the paper. The council broke up in consternation; for His Majesty swore, that if the paper was not translated before the next day at noon, he would bastinado every one of the privy council, beginning with His Excellency the Grand Vizier.

“Who has such a sharp wit as necessity?” touchingly exclaims the poet Sadee, and so, in corroboration of the words of that divine songster, the next day at noon, sure enough, a man was found—a most ancient, learned, and holy dervish, who knew all the languages

under the sun, and, by consequence, that in which the paper was written.

'It was in the most secret Sanscrit tongue ; and when the dervish read it, he requested that he might communicate its contents privately to His Majesty, or at least only in the presence of his first minister.

'Retiring then to the private apartments with the Vizier, His Majesty bade the dervish interpret the meaning of the writing round the bottle.

'“The meaning, sire, is this,” said the learned dervish. “Whoever, after bowing his head three times to the east—”

“The old woman wagged hers,” cried the King. “I remarked it, but thought it was only palsy.”

“Whoever, after bowing his head three times to the east, swallows a grain of this powder, may change himself into whatever animal he please : be it beast, or insect, or bird. Likewise, when he is so changed, he will know the language of beasts, insects, and birds, and be able to answer each after his kind. And when the person so transformed desires to be restored to his own shape, he has only to utter the name of the god ‘Budgaroo’, who himself appeared upon earth in the shape of beasts, birds, ay, and fishes,¹ and he will instantly resume his proper figure. But let the person using this precious powder especially beware, that during the course of his metamorphosis he do not give way to laughter ; for should he indulge in any such unholy mirth, his memory will infallibly forsake him, and not being able to recall the talismanic word,

¹ In Professor Schwam's *Sanskritische Alterthumskunde*, is a learned account of the transmutations of this Indian divinity.—G. O'G. G.

he will remain in the shape into which he has changed himself."

'When this strange document had been communicated to His Majesty, he caused the dervish's mouth to be filled with sugar-candy, gave him a purse of gold, and bade him depart with every honour.

'"You had better at least have waited," said the shrewd Vizier, "to see if the interpretation be correct, for who can tell whether this dervish is deceiving us or no?"

'King Mushook rejoined that that point should be put at rest at once, and, grimly smiling, ordered the Vizier to take a pinch of powder, and change himself into whatever animal he pleased.

'Munsoor had nothing for it but to wish himself a dog; he turned to the east, nodded his head thrice, swallowed the powder, and lo! there he was—a poodle—an old, fat, lame, one-eyed poodle, whose appearance made his master laugh inordinately, though Munsoor himself, remembering the prohibition and penalty, was far too wise to indulge in any such cachinnation.

'Having satisfied his royal master by his antics, the old Vizier uttered the requisite word, and was speedily restored to his former shape.

'And now I might tell how the King of Persia and his faithful attendant indulged themselves in all sorts of transformations by the use of the powder; how they frequented the society of all manner of beasts, and gathered a deal of wisdom from their conversation; how, perching on this housetop in the likeness of sparrows, they peered into all the family secrets of the proprietors; how, buzzing into that harem window in the likeness of bluebottle flies, they

surveyed at their leisure the beauties within, and enjoyed the confusion of the emirs and noblemen, when they described to them at divan every particular regarding the shape, and features, and dress, of the ladies they kept so secretly in the anderoon. One of these freaks had like to have cost the King dear ; for sitting on Hassan Ebu Suneebee's wall, looking at Bulkous, his wife, and lost in admiration of that moon of beauty, a spider issued out from a crevice, and had as nearly as possible gobbled up the King of Persia. This event was a lesson to him, therefore ; and he was so frightened by it, that he did not care for the future to be too curious about other peoples' affairs, or at least to take upon himself the form of such a fragile thing as a bluebottle fly.

'One morning—indeed I believe on my conscience that His Majesty and the Vizier had been gadding all night, or they never could have been abroad so early—they were passing those large swampy grounds, which everybody knows are in the neighbourhood of Tehran, and where the Persian lords are in the habit of hunting herons with the hawk. The two gentlemen were disguised, I don't know how; but seeing a stork by the side of the pool, stretching its long neck, and tossing about its legs very queerly, King Mushook felt suddenly a longing to know what these motions of the animal meant, and taking upon themselves likewise the likeness of storks (the Vizier's dumpy nose stretched out into a very strange bill, I promise you), they both advanced to the bird at the pool, and greeted it in the true storkish language.

'“Good morning, Mr Long Bill,” said the stork (a female), curtesying politely, “you are abroad early today ; and the sharp air, no doubt, makes you hungry :

here is half an eel which I beg you to try, or a frog, which you will find very fat and tender." But the royal stork was not inclined to eat frogs, being no Frank.'

'Have a care, Scheherazade,' here interposed the Sultan. 'Do you mean to tell me that there are any people, even among the unbelievers, who are such filthy wretches as to eat frogs?—Bah! I can't believe it!'

Scheherazade did not vouch for the fact, but continued. 'The King declined the proffered breakfast, and presently falling into conversation with the young female stork, bantered her gaily about her presence in such a place of a morning, and without her mamma, praised her figure and the slinness of her legs (which made the young stork blush till she was almost as red as a flamingo), and paid her a thousand compliments that made her think the stranger one of the most delightful creatures she had ever met.

'“Sir,” said she, “we live in some reeds hard by; and as my mamma, one of the best mothers in the world, who fed us children with her own blood when we had nothing else for dinner, is no more, my papa, who is always lazy, has bidden us to look out for ourselves. You were pleased just now to compliment my I——my *limbs*.” says the stork, turning her eyes to the ground; “and the fact is, that I wish to profit, sir, by those graces with which nature endowed me, and am learning to dance. I came out here to practise a little step that I am to perform before some friends this morning, and here, sir, you have my history.”

'“I do pray and beseech you to let us see the rehearsal of the step,” said the King, quite amused; on which the young stork, stretching out her scraggy neck, and giving him an ogle with her fish-like eyes, fell to

dancing and capering in such a ridiculous way, that the King and Vizier could restrain their gravity no longer, but burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter. I do not know that Munsoor would have laughed of his own accord, for he was a man of no sort of humour ; but he made it a point whenever his master laughed always to roar too ; and in this instance his servility cost him dear.

'The young female stork, as they were laughing, flew away in a huff, and thought them no doubt the most ill-mannered brutes in the world. When they were restored to decent gravity, the King voted that they should resume their shapes again, and hie home to breakfast. So he turned himself round to the east, bobbed his head three times according to the receipt, and——

'“Vizier,” said he, “what the deuce is the word?—Hudge, kudge, fudge—what is it?”

'The Vizier had forgotten too ; and then the condition annexed to the charm came over these wretched men, and they felt they were storks for ever. In vain they racked their poor brains to discover the word—they were no wiser at the close of the day than at the beginning, and at nightfall were fain to take wing from the lonely morass where they had passed so many miserable hours, and seek for shelter somewhere.'

PART THE SECOND

The Enchanted Princess

After flying about for some time, the poor storks perched upon the palace, where it was evident that all was in consternation. “Ah!” said the King, with a sigh, “why, O cursed Vizier, didst thou ever bring

that beggar-woman into my presence? here it is an hour after sunset, and at this hour I should have been seated at a comfortable supper, but for thy odious officiousness, and my own fatal curiosity."

'What His Majesty said was true ; and, having eaten nothing all day (for they could not make up their stomachs to subsist upon raw frogs and fish), he saw, to his inexpressible mortification, his own supper brought into the royal closet at the usual hour, taken away from thence, and the greater part of it eaten up by the servants as they carried it back to the kitchen.

'For three days longer, as they lingered about Tehran, that city was in evident dismay and sorrow. On the first day a council was held, and a great deal of discussion took place between the mollahs and emirs ; on the second day another council was held, and all the mollahs and emirs swore eternal fidelity to King Mushook ; on the third day a third council was held, and they voted to a man that all faithful Persians had long desired the return of their rightful sovereign and worship, and proclaimed Ghuzroo Sultan of Persia. Ghuzroo and his son, Ameen Adawb, entered the divan. What a thrill passed through the bosom of Mushook (who was perched on a window of the hall) when he saw Ghuzroo walk up and take possession of his august throne, and beheld in the countenance of that unbeliever the traits of the very old woman who had sold him the box!

'It would be tedious to describe to Your Majesty the numberless voyages and the long dreary flights which the unhappy Sultan and Vizier now took. There is hardly a mosque in all Persia or Arabia on which they did not light ; and as for frogs and fishes, they speedily learned to be so little particular as to swallow

them raw with considerable satisfaction, and, I do believe, tried every pond and river in Asia.

'At last they came to India ; and being then somewhere in the neighbourhood of Agra, they went to take their evening meal at a lake in a wood : the moon was shining on it, and there was upon one of the trees an owl hooting and screaming in the most melancholy manner.

'The two wanderers were discussing their victuals, and it did not at first come into their heads to listen to the owl's bewailings ; but as they were satisfied, they began presently to hearken to the complaints of the bird of night that sate on a mango tree, its great round, white face shining in the moon. The owl sung a little elegy, which may be rendered in the following manner :

Too—too—too—oo long have I been in imprisonment ;
Who—o—o—o is coming to deliver me?

In the darkness of the night I look out, and see not my deliverer ;

I make the grove resound with my strains, but no one hears me.

I look out at the moon ;—my face was once as fair as hers :
 She is the queen of night, and I was a princess as celebrated.
 I sit under the cypress trees, and was once as thin as they are :

Could their dark leaves compare to my raven tresses?

I was a princess once, and my talents were everywhere sung of ;

I was indebted for my popularity not only to beauty but *to wit* ;

Ah, where is the destined prince that is to come to liberate,
 and *to who—o?*'

'Cut the verses short, Scheherazade,' said the Sultan.

And the obedient Princess instantly resumed her story in prose.

“What!” said King Mushook, stepping up to the owl, “are you the victim of enchantment?”

“Alas! kind stranger, of whatever feather you be, for the moon is so bright that I cannot see you in the least,—I was a princess, as I have just announced in my poem; and famous, I may say, for my beauty all over India. Rotu Muckun is my name, and my father is King of Hindostan. A monster from Bombay, an idolater and practiser of enchantments, came to my court and asked my hand for his son; but because I spurned the wretch, he, under the disguise of an old woman——”

“With a box of trinkets,” broke out the Vizier.

“Of no such thing,” said the owl, or rather the disguised Princess Rotu Muckun; “with a basket of peaches, of which I was known to be fond, entered the palace garden one evening as I was seated there with my maidens, and offered me a peach, of which I partook, and was that instant turned into an owl. My attendants fled, screaming at the metamorphosis; and as the old woman went away, she clenched her fist at me and laughed, and said, ‘Now Princess, you will remember the vengeance of Ghuzroo.’ ”

“This *is* indeed marvellous!” exclaimed the King of Persia. “Know, madam, that the humble individual who now addresses you was a year since no other than Persia’s king.”

“Heavens!” said the Princess, trembling, and rustling all her feathers; “can you be the famous and beautiful Mushook, who disappeared from Tehran with his Grand Vizier?”

“No other, madam,” said the King, laying his claw,

on his breast ; "and the most devoted of your servants."

' "Heigho!" said she ; "I would that you had resumed your former shape, and that what you said were true ; but you men, I have always heard, are sad, sad deceivers!"

'Being pressed farther to explain the meaning of her wish, the Princess said that she never could resume her former appearance until she could find someone who would marry her under her present form ; and what was more, she said, an old Brahmin had made a prophecy concerning her, that she should be saved from destruction by a stork.

' "This speech," said the Vizier, drawing His Majesty aside, "is the sheerest and most immodest piece of fiction on the part of Madam Owl that ever I heard. What is the upshot of it? The hideous old wretch, pining for a husband and not being able on account of her age and ugliness, doubtless, to procure one among birds of her own degree, sees us two slim, elegant, fashionable fellows pass, and trumps up instantly a story about her being a princess, and the deuce knows what. Even suppose she be a princess, let Your Majesty remember what the poet Ferooz observes :

'Women are not all beautiful—for one moon-eyed,
Nine hundred and ninety-nine are as ugly as Shaitan

Let us have a care, then, how we listen to her stories."

' "Vizier," answered His Majesty, "I have remarked that you are always talking about ugliness ; and, by my beard! you are the ugliest man in my dominions. Be she handsome or hideous, I am sure that there is something in the story of the Princess mysteriously connected with our fate. Do you not remem-

ber that extraordinary dream which I had in my youth and which declared that I too should be saved from danger by an owl? Had you not also such a dream on the self-same night? Let us not, therefore, disregard the warnings of Fate :—the risk shall be run ; the Princess shall be married, or my name's not Mushook."

"Well, sir," said the Vizier, with a shrug, "if you insist upon marrying her, I cannot, of course, give any objection to the royal will : and Your Majesty must remember that I wash my hands of the business altogether."

"*"I marry her!"* screamed the King in a rage, "Vizier, are you a fool? Do you suppose me such a fool as to buy a pig in a poke, as they say in Bagdad?"

"I was sure Your Majesty would not be so imprudent," said the Vizier in a soothing tone.

"Of course I wouldn't ; no, Vizier, my old and tried servant, *you* shall marry the Princess Rotu Muckun, and incur the risk of this adventure."

The poor Vizier knew he had only to obey, were his master to bid him to bite off his own nose ; so he promised compliance in this instance with as good a grace as he could muster. But the gentlemen, in the course of this little dispute, had not taken into consideration that the owl had wings as well as they, and had followed them into the dark brake where the colloquy took place, and could see them perfectly, and hear every word that passed.

"Tut-tut-tut-too!" shrieked out the owl in a shrill voice, "my lord of Persia, and you, Grand Vizier, do you suppose that I, the Princess of Hindostan, am to be cast about from one person to another like a shuttle-

cock? Do you suppose that I, the loveliest woman in the universe, am tamely to listen to doubts regarding my beauty, and finally to yield up my charms to an ugly, old decrepit monster like your Grand Vizier?"

"Madam——" interposed the King of Persia.

"Tut-tut-too! Don't madam me, sir," said the Princess in a flutter,—*"mademoiselle, if you please; and mademoiselle to remain, rather than be insulted so. Talk about buying a pig in a poke, indeed! here is a pretty gentlemanlike phrase for a monarch who has been used to good society!—pig in a poke, indeed! I'll tell you what, my lord, I have a great mind to make you carry your pigs to another market. And as for my poor person, I will see,"* cried the owl, sobbing, *"if some noble-hearted person be not more favourable to-to-to to-it-to-oo-oo-oo oo!"* Here she set up such an hysterical howling, that His Majesty the King of Persia thought she would have dropped off her perch.

'He was a good-natured sovereign, and could not bear to see the tears of a woman.'

'What a fool!' said the Sultan. But Scheherazade took no notice.

'And having his heart melted by her sorrows, said to her, "Cheer up, madam, it shall never be said that Mushook deserted a lady in distress. I swear to you by the ninth book of the Koran, that you shall have my hand as soon as I get it back myself; in the meanwhile accept my claw, and with it the heart of the King of Persia."

"Oh sir!" said the owl, "this is too great joy—too much honour—I cannot," said she, in a faint voice, "bear it!— Oh, Heavens!— Maidens, unlace me!— Some water—some water—a jug-jug-jug——"

'Here what the King had formerly feared actually took place, and the owl, in an excess of emotion, actually tumbled off the branch in a fainting fit, and fell into the thicket below.

'The Vizier and His Majesty ran like mad to the lake for water ; but ah ! what a scene met their view on coming back !

'Forth there came to meet them the loveliest damsel that ever greeted the eyes of monarch or vizier. Fancy, sir, a pair of eyes——'

'Cut the description short, Scheherazade,' interrupted the Sultan ; 'your eyes, my dear, are quite pretty enough for me.'

'In short, sir, she was the most lovely woman in the world of her time ; and the poor old Vizier, as he beheld her, was mad to think what a prize he had lost. The King of Persia flung himself at her feet, and vowed himself to be the happiest of men.'

'Happiest of men !' roared out the Sultan. 'Why, woman, he is a stork ; how did he get back to his shape, I want to know ?'

'Why, sir, it must be confessed that when the Princess of Hindostan, now restored to her pristine beauty, saw that no sort of change had taken place in her affianced husband, she felt a little ashamed of the connection, and more than once in their journey from Agra to the court of her father at Delhi, she thought of giving her companion the slip : "For 'how'", said she, "am I to marry a stork ?" However, the King would never leave her for a moment out of his sight, or, when His Majesty slept, the Vizier kept his eye upon her ; and so at last they walked and walked until they came near to Delhi on the banks of the Jumna.

'A magnificent barge was floating down the river,

pulled by a hundred men with gilded oars, and dressed in liveries of cloth of gold. The prow of the barge was shaped like a peacock, and formed of precious stones and enamel ; and at the stern of the vessel was an awning of crimson silk, supported by pillars of silver, under which, in a yellow satin robe, covered with diamonds of intolerable brightness, there sat an old gentleman smoking, and dissolved seemingly in grief.

“Heavens!” cried the Princess, “’tis my father!” and straightway she began flapping her pocket-handkerchief, and crying at the top of her voice, “Father, father, ’tis your Rotu Muckun calls!”

‘When the old gentleman, who was smoking in yellow satin, heard that voice, he started up wildly, let drop his hookah, shouted hoarsely to the rowers to pull to the shore, and the next minute tumbled backwards in a fainting fit. The next minute but one he was in the arms of his beloved girl, the proudest and happiest of fathers.

‘The Princess at the moment of meeting, and in the hurry of running into the boat, had, it must be confessed, quite forgotten her two storks ; and as these made an effort to follow her, one of the rowers with his gilded oar gave the Grand Vizier a crack over the leg, which caused that poor functionary to limp for many years after. But our wanderers were not to be put off so. Taking wing, they flew right under the awning of the boat, and perched down on the sofa close by the King of Hindostan and his daughter.

“‘What, in Heaven’s name,” said Hindostan, “are these filthy birds, that smell so horribly of fish? Faugh! turn them out.”

“‘Filthy yourself, sir, my brother,” answered the King of Persia, “the smell of fish is not much

worse than that of tobacco, I warrant. Heigho! I have not had a pipe for many a long day!"

'Here Rotu Muckun, seeing her father's wonder that a stork should talk his language, and his anger at the bird's impudence, interposed, and related to His Majesty all the circumstances attending the happy change that had taken place.

'While she was speaking (and her story was a pretty long one), the King of Persia flung himself back in an easy attitude on one of the sofas, crossing his long legs, and folding his wings over his chest. He was, to tell the truth, rather piqued at the reception which his brother of Hindostan had given him. Old Munsoor stood moodily at a little distance, holding up his game leg.

'His master, however, was determined to show that he was perfectly at his ease. "Hindostan, my old buck," said he, "what a deuced comfortable sofa this is; and, egad, what a neat turn-out of a barge!"

"The old gentleman, who was a stickler for ceremony, said dryly, "I am glad Your Majesty finds the sofa comfortable, and the barge to your liking. Here we don't call it a barge, but a BUDGEROW."

'As he spoke this word, the King of Persia bounced off his seat as if he had been shot, and upset the hookah over the King of Hindostan's legs; the moody old Grand Vizier clapped his wings and screamed for joy; the Princess shrieked for astonishment; and the whole boat's crew were in wonder, as they saw the two birds turn towards the east, bob their long bills three times, and call out "Budgerow"!

'At that word the birds disappeared, and in their place, before the astonished sovereign of Hindostan,

there stood two gentlemen in the Persian habit. One of them was fat, old and one-eyed, of a yellow complexion, and limping on a leg—'twas Munsoor, the Vizier. The other—ah, what a thrill passed through Rotu Muckun's heart as she beheld him!—had a dark countenance, a dark flashing eye, a royal black beard, a high forehead, on which a little Persian cap was jauntily placed. A pelisse of cashmere and sables covered his broad chest, and showed off his excessively slim waist to advantage; his little feet were encased in yellow slippers; when he spoke, his cornelian lips displayed thirty-two pearly teeth; in his girdle was his sword, and on the hilt of it that famous diamond, worth one hundred and forty-three millions of tomauns.

'When the King of Hindostan saw that diamond, he at once knew that Mushook could be no imposter, and taking him heartily by the hand, the good-natured monarch ordered servants to pick up the pieces of the chillum, and to bring fresh ones for the King of Persia and himself.

'“You say it is a long time since you smoked a pipe,” said Hindostan waggishly; “there is a lady here that I dare swear will fill one for you.” With this and other sallies the royal party passed on to Delhi, where Munsoor was accommodated with diaculum and surgical aid, and where the marriage was celebrated between the King of Persia and the Princess of Hindostan.'

'And did the King of Persia ever get his kingdom back again?' asked the Sultan.

'Of course he did, sir,' replied Scheherazade, 'for where did you ever hear of a king who had been kept out of his just rights by a wicked enchanter that did not regain his possessions at the end of a story? No,

sir, at the last page of a tale, wicked enchanters are always punished, and suffering virtue always rewarded ; and though I have my doubts whether in real life——'

'Be hanged to your prate, madam, and let me know at once *how* King Mushook got back his kingdom, and what he did to Ghuzroo and his son Ameen Adawb?'

'Why, sir, marching with five hundred thousand men, whom his father-in-law placed under his command, King Mushook went, via Caubul and Affghanistan, into Persia ; he defeated the usurping Ghuzroo upon the plains of Tehran, and caused that idolatrous monarch to be bastinadoed to death. As for his son, Ameen Adawb, as that young Prince had not taken any part in his father's rebellion, Mushook, who was a merciful sovereign, only ordered him to take a certain quantity of the powder, and to wish himself to be a stork. Then he put him into a cage, and hung him outside the palace wall. This done, Mushook and his Princess swayed magnificently the sceptre of Persia, lived happily, were blest by their subjects, had an infinite number of children, and ate pillau and rice every day.

'Now, sir, it happened, after several years' captivity in the cage, that the Prince Ameen Adawb——'

Here Scheherazade paused ; for, looking at her royal husband, she saw that His Majesty was fast asleep, and deferred the history of Prince Ameen Adawb until another occasion.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING.

The Rose and the Ring ; the 'Burlesques'.

FRANCIS BRET HARTE
THE STOLEN CIGAR CASE

BY A. CO—N D—LE

Francis Bret Harte was born in New York in 1839. He became in succession a messenger, a drug clerk, a printer, a school teacher, and secretary to the Superintendent of the Mint in San Francisco. His famous books are *Condensed Novels* and *The Luck of Roaring Camp*. He died in 1902 at Camberley, Surrey. Plot construction and humour are the chief features of his writings.

I FOUND Hemlock Jones in the old Brook Street lodgings, musing before the fire. With the freedom of an old friend I at once threw myself in my usual familiar attitude at his feet, and gently caressed his boot. I was induced to do this for two reasons : one that it enabled me to get a good look at his bent, concentrated face, and the other that it seemed to indicate my reverence for his superhuman insight. So absorbed was he even then, in tracking some mysterious clue, that he did not seem to notice me. But therein I was wrong—as I always was in my attempt to understand that powerful intellect.

'It is raining,' he said, without lifting his head.

'You have been out, then?' I said quickly.

'No. But I see that your umbrella is wet, and that your overcoat has drops of water on it.'

I sat aghast at his penetration. After a pause he said carelessly, as if dismissing the subject : 'Besides, I hear the rain on the window. Listen.'

I listened. I could scarcely credit my ears, but there

was the soft pattering of drops on the panes. It was evident there was no deceiving this man!

'Have you been busy lately?' I asked, changing the subject. 'What new problem—given up by Scotland Yard as inscrutable—has occupied that gigantic intellect?'

He drew back his foot slightly, and seemed to hesitate ere he returned it to its original position. Then he answered wearily: 'Mere trifles—nothing to speak of. The Prince Kupoli has been here to get my advice regarding the disappearance of certain rubies from the Kremlin; the Rajah of Pootibad, after vainly beheading his entire bodyguard, has been obliged to seek my assistance to recover a jewelled sword. The Grand Duchess of Pretzel-Brauntswig is desirous of discovering where her husband was on the night of February 14; and, last night'—he lowered his voice slightly—'a lodger in this very house, meeting me on the stairs, wanted to know why they didn't answer his bell.'

I could not help smiling—until I saw a frown gathering on his inscrutable forehead.

'Pray remember,' he said coldly, 'that it was through such an apparently trivial question that I found out Why Paul Ferroll Killed His Wife, and What Happened to Jones!'

I became dumb at once. He paused for a moment, and then, suddenly changing back to his usual pitiless, analytical style, he said 'When I say these are trifles, they are so in comparison to an affair that is now before me. A crime has been committed and, singularly enough, against myself. You start,' he said; 'you wonder who would have dared to attempt it. So

did I ; nevertheless, it has been done. I have been *robbed!*

'*You* robbed! You, Hemlock Jones, the Terror of Peculators!' I gasped in amazement, arising and gripping the table as I faced him.

'Yes! Listen. I would confess it to no other. But *you* who have followed my career, who know my methods ; you, for whom I have partly lifted the veil that conceals my plans from ordinary humanity ; you, who have for years rapturously accepted my confidences, passionately admired my inductions and inferences, placed yourself at my beck and call, become my slave, grovelled at my feet, given up your practice except those few unremunerative and rapidly decreasing patients to whom, in moments of abstraction over *my* problems, you have administered strychnine for quinine, and arsenic for Epsom salts ; you, who have sacrificed anything and everybody to me—*you* I make my confidant!'

I arose and embraced him warmly, yet he was already so engrossed in thought that at the same moment he mechanically placed his hand upon his watch chain as if to consult the time. 'Sit down,' he said. 'Have a cigar?'

'I have given up cigar smoking,' I said.

'Why?' he asked.

I hesitated, and perhaps coloured. I had really given it up because, with my diminished practice, it was too expensive. I could afford only a pipe. 'I prefer a pipe,' I said laughingly. 'But tell me of this robbery. What have you lost?'

He arose and, planting himself before the fire with his hands under his coat-tails, looked down upon me reflectively for a moment. 'Do you remember the

cigar case presented to me by the Turkish Ambassador for discovering the missing favourite of the Grand Vizier in the fifth chorus girl at the Hilarity Theatre? It was that one. I mean the cigar case. It was encrusted with diamonds.'

'And the largest one had been supplanted by paste, I said.

'Ah,' he said, with a reflective smile, 'you know that?'

'You told me yourself. I remember considering it a proof of your extraordinary perception. But, by Jove, you don't mean to say you have lost it?'

He was silent for a moment. 'No—it has been stolen, it is true—but I shall find it. And by myself alone! In your profession, my dear fellow, when a member is seriously ill, he does not prescribe for himself, but calls in a brother doctor. Therein we differ. I shall take this matter in my own hands.'

'And where could you find better?' I said enthusiastically. 'I should say the cigar case is as good as recovered already.'

'I shall remind you of that again,' he said lightly. 'And now, to show you my confidence in your judgement, in spite of my determination to pursue this alone, I am willing to listen to any suggestions from you.'

He drew a memorandum book from his pocket and, with a grave smile, took up his pencil.

I could scarcely believe my senses. He, the great Hemlock Jones, accepting suggestions from a humble individual like myself! I kissed his hand reverently, and began in a joyous tone:

'First, I should advertise, offering a reward; I should give the same intimation in hand-bills, distributed at the "pubs" and the pastry-cooks.' I should next visit

the different pawn-brokers ; I should give notice at the police station. I should examine the servants. I should thoroughly search the house and my own pockets. I speak relatively,' I added, with a laugh. 'Of course I mean *your* own.'

He gravely made an entry of these details.

'Perhaps,' I added, 'you have already done this?'

'Perhaps,' he returned enigmatically. 'Now, my dear friend,' he continued, putting the note-book in his pocket and rising, 'would you excuse me for a few moments? Make yourself perfectly at home until I return ; there may be some things,' he added with a sweep of his hand towards his heterogeneously-filled shelves, 'that may interest you and while away the time. There are pipes and tobacco in that corner.'

Then nodding to me with the same inscrutable face he left the room. I was too well accustomed to his methods to think much of his unceremonious withdrawal, and made no doubt he was off to investigate some clue which had suddenly occurred to his active intelligence.

Left to myself I cast a cursory glance over his shelves. There were a number of small glass jars containing earthy substances labelled, 'Pavement and Road Sweepings', from the principal thoroughfares and suburbs of London, with the sub-directions for 'identifying foot-tracks'. There were several other jars labelled, 'Fluff from Omnibus and Road-Car Seats', 'Coconut Fibre and Rope Strands from Mattings in Public Places', 'Cigarette Stumps and Match Ends from Floor of Palace Theatre, Row A, 1 to 50'. Everywhere were evidences of this wonderful man's system and perspicacity.

I was thus engaged when I heard the slight creak-

ing of a door, and I looked up as a stranger entered. He was a rough-looking man with a shabby overcoat and a still more disreputable muffler around his throat and the lower part of his face. Considerably annoyed at his intrusion, I turned upon him rather sharply, when, with a mumbled, growling apology for mistaking the room, he shuffled out again and closed the door. I followed him quickly to the landing and saw that he disappeared down the stairs. With my mind full of the robbery, the incident made a singular impression upon me. I knew my friend's habit of hasty absences from his room in his moments of deep inspiration ; it was only too probable that, with his powerful intellect and magnificent perceptive genius concentrated on one subject, he should be careless of his own belongings, and no doubt even forget to take the ordinary precaution of locking up his drawers. I tried one or two and found that I was right—although for some reason I was unable to open one to its fullest extent. The handles were sticky, as if someone had opened them with dirty fingers. Knowing Hemlock's fastidious cleanliness, I resolved to inform him of this circumstance, but I forgot it, alas! until—but I am anticipating my story.

His absence was strangely prolonged. I at last seated myself by the fire, and lulled by warmth and the patter of the rain on the window, I fell asleep. I may have dreamt, for during my sleep I had a vague semi-consciousness as of hands being softly pressed on my pockets—no doubt induced by the story of the robbery. When I came fully to my senses, I found Hemlock Jones sitting on the other side of the hearth, his deeply-concentrated gaze fixed on the fire.

'I found you so comfortably asleep that I could not bear to awaken you,' he said with a smile.

I rubbed my eyes. 'And what news?' I asked. 'How have you succeeded?'

'Better than I expected,' he said, 'and I think,' he added, tapping his note-book, 'I owe much to *you*.'

Deeply gratified, I awaited more. But in vain. I ought to have remembered that in his moods Hemlock Jones was reticence itself. I told him simply of the strange intrusion, but he only laughed.

Later, when I arose to go, he looked at me playfully. 'If you were a married man,' he said, 'I would advise you not to go home until you had brushed your sleeve. There are a few short, brown sealskin hairs on the inner side of your forearm—just where they would have adhered if your arm had encircled a sealskin coat with some pressure!'

'For once you are at fault,' I said triumphantly; 'the hair is my own, as you will perceive, I have just had it cut at the hairdresser's, and no doubt this arm projected beyond the apron.'

He frowned slightly, yet, nevertheless, on my turning to go he embraced me warmly—a rare exhibition in that man of ice. He even helped me on with my overcoat, and pulled out and smoothed down the flaps of my pockets. He was particular, too, in fitting my arm in my overcoat sleeve, shaking the sleeve down from the armhole to the cuff with his deft fingers. 'Come again soon!' he said, clapping me on the back.

'At any and all times,' I said enthusiastically; 'I only ask ten minutes twice a day to eat a crust at my office, and four hours' sleep at night—and the rest of my time is devoted to you always—as you know.'

'It is indeed,' he said with his impenetrable smile.

Nevertheless, I did not find him at home when I next called. One afternoon, when nearing my own home, I met him in one of his favourite disguises—a long blue swallow-tailed coat, striped cotton trousers, large turnover collar, blacked face and white hat, carrying a tambourine. Of course to others the disguise was perfect, although it was known to myself, and I passed him—according to an old understanding between us—without the slightest recognition, trusting to a later explanation. At another time, as I was making a professional visit to the wife of a publican at the East End, I saw him, in the disguise of a broken-down artisan, looking into the window of an adjacent pawnshop. I was delighted to see that he was evidently following my suggestions, and in my joy I ventured to tip him a wink; it was abstractedly returned.

Two days later I received a note appointing a meeting at his lodgings that night. That meeting, alas! was the one memorable occurrence of my life, and the last meeting I ever had with Hemlock Jones! I will try to set it down calmly, though my pulses still throb with the recollection of it.

I found him standing before the fire, with that look upon his face which I had seen only once or twice in our acquaintance—a look which I may call an absolute concatenation of inductive and deductive ratiocination—from which all that was human, tender, or sympathetic was absolutely discharged. He was simply an icy, algebraic symbol! Indeed his whole being was concentrated to that extent that his clothes fitted loosely, and his head was absolutely so much reduced in size by his mental compression that his hat tipped back from his forehead and literally hung on his massive ears.

After I had entered he locked the doors, fastened the windows, and even placed a chair before the chimney. As I watched these significant precautions with absorbing interest, he suddenly drew a revolver and, presenting it to my temple, said in low, icy tones:

'Hand over that cigar case!'

Even in my bewilderment my reply was truthful, spontaneous and involuntary. 'I haven't got it,' I said.

He smiled bitterly, and threw down his revolver. 'I expected that reply! Then let me now confront you with something more awful, more deadly, more relentless and convincing than that mere lethal weapon—the damning, inductive and deductive proofs of your guilt!' He drew from his pocket a roll of paper and a note-book.

'But surely,' I gasped, 'you are joking' You could not for a moment believe—'

'Silence! Sit down!' I obeyed.

'You have condemned yourself,' he went on pitilessly. 'Condemned yourself on my processes—processes familiar to you, applauded by you, accepted by you for years! We will go back to the time when you first saw the cigar case. Your expressions,' he said in cold, deliberate tones, consulting his paper, were, "How beautiful! I wish it were mine". This was your first step in crime—and my first indication. From "*I wish it were mine*" to "*I will have it mine*", and the mere detail, "*How can I make it mine*", the advance was obvious. Silence! But, as in my methods it was necessary that there should be an overwhelming inducement to the crime, that unholy admiration of yours for the mere trinket itself was not enough. You are a smoker of cigars.'

'But,' I burst out passionately, 'I told you I had given up smoking cigars.'

'Fool!' he said coldly, 'that is the *second* time you have committed yourself. Of course you told me! What more natural than for you to blazon forth that prepared and unsolicited statement to *prevent* accusation. Yet, as I said before, even that wretched attempt to cover up your tracks was not enough. I still had to find that overwhelming, impelling motive necessary to affect a man like you. That motive I found in the strongest of all impulses—Love, I suppose you would call it,' he added bitterly—'that night you called! You had brought the most conclusive proofs of it on your sleeve.'

'But——' I almost screamed.

'Silence!' he thundered. 'I know what you would say. You would say that even if you had embraced some Young Person in a sealskin coat, what had that to do with the robbery? Let me tell you, then, that that sealskin coat represented the quality and character of your fatal entanglement! You bartered your honour for it—that stolen cigar case was the purchaser of the sealskin coat!

'Silence! Having thoroughly established your motive, I now proceed to the commission of the crime itself. Ordinary people would have begun with that—with an attempt to discover the whereabouts of the missing object. These are not *my* methods.'

So overpowering was his penetration that, although I knew myself innocent, I licked my lips with avidity to hear the further details of this lucid exposition of my crime

'You committed that theft the night I showed you the cigar case and after I had carelessly thrown it in

that drawer. You were sitting in that chair and I had arisen to take something from that shelf. In that instant you secured your booty without rising. Silence! Do you remember when I helped you on with your overcoat the other night? I was particular about fitting your arm in. While doing so I measured your arm with a spring tape measure, from the shoulder to the cuff. A later visit to your tailor confirmed that measurement. It proved to be the *exact distance between your chair and that drawer!*

I sat stunned.

'The rest are mere corroborative details! You were again tampering with the drawer when I discovered you doing so! Do not start! The stranger that blundered into the room with a muffler on—was myself! More, I had placed a little soap on the drawer handles when I purposely left you alone. The soap was on your hand when I shook it at parting. I softly felt your pockets, when you were asleep, for further developments. I embraced you when you left—that I might feel if you had the cigar case or any other articles hidden on your body. This confirmed me in the belief that you had already disposed of it in the manner and for the purpose I have shown you. As I still believed you capable of remorse and confession, I twice allowed you to see I was on your track: once in the garb of an itinerant negro minstrel, and the second time as a workman looking in the window of the pawnshop where you pledged your booty.'

'But,' I burst out, 'if you had asked the pawnbroker, you would have seen how unjust——'

'Fool!' he hissed, 'that was one of *your* suggestions—to search the pawnshops! Do you suppose I followed any of your suggestions—the suggestions of the

thief? On the contrary, they told me what to avoid.'

'And I suppose,' I said bitterly, 'you have not even searched your drawer?'

'No,' he said calmly.

I was for the first time really vexed. I went to the nearest drawer and pulled it out sharply. It stuck as it had before, leaving a part of the drawer unopened. By working it, however, I discovered that it was impeded by some obstacle that had slipped to the upper part of the drawer, and held it firmly fast. Inserting my hand, I pulled out the impeding object. It was the missing cigar case! I turned to him with a cry of joy.

But I was appalled at his expression. A look of contempt was now added to his acute, penetrating gaze. 'I have been mistaken,' he said slowly; 'I had not allowed for your weakness and cowardice! I thought too highly of you even in your guilt! But I see now why you tampered with that drawer the other night. But some inexplicable means—possibly another theft—you took the cigar case out of pawn and, like a whipped hound, restored it to me in this feeble, clumsy fashion. You thought to deceive me—Hemlock Jones!—more, you thought to destroy my infallibility. Go! I give you your liberty. I shall not summon the three policemen who wait in the adjoining room—but out of my sight for ever!'

As I stood once more dazed and petrified, he took me firmly by the ear and led me into the hall, closing the door behind him. This reopened presently, wide enough to permit him to thrust out my hat, overcoat, umbrella, and overshoes, and then closed against me for ever!

I never saw him again. I am bound to say, however, that thereafter my business increased, I recovered

much of my old practice, and a few of my patients recovered also. I became rich. I had a brougham and a house in the West End. But I often wondered, pondering on that wonderful man's penetration and insight, if, in some lapse of consciousness, I had not really stolen his cigar case!

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING .

Condensed Novels ; The Luck of Roaring Camp.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

THE HOME-COMING

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was educated mostly at home. He took charge of his father's estates at 24 ; at 40, he founded a school at Shantiniketan, Bolpur which developed later into a centre of international culture. He won the Nobel prize for literature in 1913.

He has been one of the greatest literary figures of the world. There is hardly a branch of literature which he has left untouched and which he has not adorned by his writings. He has written dramas, poems, novels, short stories, and essays. *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon*, *Chitra*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, *Post Office*, *Sadhana*, *Kabir's poems*, *Fruit Gathering*, *Stray Birds*, *My Reminiscences*, *Sacrifice and other Plays*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Personality*, *Nationalism*, *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, *Mashi and other Stories*, *The Parrot's Training*, *The Home and the World*, *The Religion of Man* are some of his books in English. He wrote mostly in Bengali. Calcutta, Dacca, and Benares Hindu Universities conferred the D.Litt. degree on him *honoris causa*. His books have been translated into almost all the important languages of the world. There are beautiful psychological touches in his short stories.

PHATIK Chakravarti was the ringleader among the boys of the village. One day a plan for new mischief entered his head. There was a heavy log lying on the mud-flat of the river, waiting to be shaped into a mast for a boat. His plan was that they should all work together to shift the log by main force from its place and roll it away. The owner of the log would

be angry and surprised, while they would all enjoy the fun. Everyone supported the proposal, and it was carried unanimously.

But just as the fun was about to begin, Makhan, Phatik's younger brother, sauntered up without a word and sat down on the log in front of them all. The boys were puzzled for a moment. One of them pushed him rather timidly, and told him to get up; but he remained quite unconcerned. He appeared like a young philosopher meditating on the futility of games. Phatik was furious. 'Makhan,' he cried, 'if you don't get up this minute, I'll thrash you!'

Makhan only moved to a more comfortable position.

Now, if Phatik was to keep his regal dignity before the public, it was clear that he must carry out his threat. But his courage failed him at the crisis. His fertile brain, however, rapidly seized upon a new manœuvre which would discomfort his brother and afford his followers added amusement. He gave the word of command to roll the log and Makhan over together. Makhan heard the order and made it a point of honour to stick on. But like those who attempt earthly fame in other matters, he overlooked the fact that there was peril in it.

The boys began to heave at the log with all their might calling out, 'One, two, three, go!' At the word 'go' the log went; and with it went Makhan's philosophy, glory and all.

The other boys shouted themselves hoarse with delight. But Phatik was a little frightened. He knew what was coming. And he was not mistaken, for Makhan rose from Mother Earth blind as Fate and screaming like the Furies. He rushed at Phatik,

scratched his face, beat him and kicked him, and then went crying home. The first act of the drama was over.

Phatick wiped his face, and sitting down on the edge of a sunken barge by the river-bank began to nibble a piece of grass. A boat came up to the landing and a middle-aged man, with grey hair and dark moustache, stepped on shore. He saw the boy sitting there doing nothing and asked him where the Chakravartis lived. Phatik went on nibbling the grass and said: 'Over there'; but it was quite impossible to tell where he pointed. The stranger asked him again. He swung his legs to and fro on the side of the barge and said: 'Go and find out', and continued to nibble the grass.

But, at that moment, a servant came down from the house and told Phatik that his mother wanted him. Phatik refused to move. But on this occasion the servant was the master. He roughly took Phatik up and carried him, kicking and struggling in impotent rage.

When Phatik entered the house, his mother saw him and called out angrily: 'So you have been hitting Makhan again?'

Phatik answered indignantly: 'No. I haven't! Who told you that I had?'

His mother shouted: 'Don't tell lies! You have.'

Phatik said sullenly: 'I tell you, I haven't. You ask Makhan!' But Makhan thought it best to stick to his previous statement. He said: 'Yes, mother, Phatik did hit me.'

Phatik's patience was already exhausted. He could not bear this injustice. He rushed at Makhan and rained on him a shower of blows: 'Take that,' he

cried, 'and that, and that, for telling lies.'

His mother took Makhan's side in a moment, and pulled Phatik away, returning his blows with equal vigour. When Phatik pushed her aside, she shouted out: 'What! you little villain! Would you hit your own mother?'

It was just at this critical moment that the grey-haired stranger arrived. He asked what had occurred. Phatik looked sheepish and ashamed.

But when his mother stepped back and looked at the stranger, her anger was changed to surprise. For she recognised her brother and cried: 'Why, Dada! Where have you come from?'

As she said these words, she bowed to the ground and touched his feet. Her brother Bishamber had gone away soon after she had married, and had started business in Bombay. She herself had lost her husband while he was there. Bishamber had now come back to Calcutta, and had at once made enquiries concerning his sister. As soon as he found out where she was, he had hastened to see her.

The next few days were full of rejoicing. The brother asked how the two boys were being brought up. He was told by his sister that Phatik was a perpetual nuisance. He was lazy, disobedient, and wild. But Makhan was as good as gold, as quiet as a lamb, and very fond of reading. Bishamber kindly offered to take Phatik off his sister's hands and educate him with his own children in Calcutta. The widowed mother readily agreed. When his uncle asked Phatik if he would like to go to Calcutta with him, his joy knew no bounds, and he said: 'Oh, yes, uncle!' in a way that made it quite clear that he meant it.

It was an immense relief to the mother to get rid

of Phatik. She had a prejudice against the boy, and no love was lost between the two brothers. She was in daily fear that he would some day either drown Makhan in the river, or break his head in a fight, or urge him on into some danger. At the same time she was a little distressed to see Phatik's extreme eagerness to leave his home.

Phatik, as soon as all was settled, kept asking his uncle every minute when they were to start. He was on pins all day long with excitement and lay awake most of the night. He bequeathed to Makhan, in perpetuity, his fishing-rod, his big kite, and his marbles. Indeed, at this time of departure, his generosity towards Makhan was unbounded.

When they reached Calcutta, Phatik met his aunt for the first time. She was by no means pleased with this unnecessary addition to her family. She found her own three boys quite enough to manage without taking any one else. And to bring a village lad of fourteen into their midst was terribly upsetting. Bishamber should really have thought twice before committing such an indiscretion.

In this world there is no worse nuisance than a boy at the age of fourteen. He is neither ornamental nor useful. It is impossible to shower affection on him as on a smaller boy; and he is always getting in the way. If he talks with a childish lisp he is called a baby, and if in a grown-up way he is called impertinent. In fact, talk of any kind from him is resented. Then he is at the unattractive, growing age. He grows out of his clothes with indecent haste; his voice grows hoarse and breaks and quavers; his face grows suddenly angular and unsightly. It is easy to excuse the shortcomings of early childhood, but it is hard to

tolerate even unavoidable lapses in a boy of fourteen. He becomes painfully self-conscious, and when he talks with elderly people he is either unduly forward, or else so unduly shy that he appears ashamed of his own existence.

Yet, it is at this age that in his heart of hearts, a young lad most craves recognition and love; and he becomes the devoted slave of any one who shows him consideration. But none dare openly love him, for that would be regarded as undue indulgence and therefore bad for the boy. So, what with scolding and chiding, he becomes very much like a stray dog that has lost its master.

His own home is the only Paradise that a boy of fourteen can know. To live in a strange house with strange people is little short of torture; while it is the height of bliss to receive the kind looks of women and never to suffer their slights.

It was anguish to Phatik to be an unwelcome guest in his aunt's house, constantly despised and slighted by this elderly woman. If she ever asked him to do anything for her, he would be so overjoyed that his joy would seem exaggerated; and then she would tell him not to be so stupid, but to get on with his lessons.

This constant neglect gave Phatik a feeling of almost physical oppression. He wanted to go out into the open country and fill his lungs with fresh air. But there was no open country to go to. Surrounded on all sides by Calcutta houses and walls, he would dream night after night of his village home and long to be back there. He remembered the glorious meadow where he used to fly his kite all day long; the broad

river-banks where he would wander the livelong day singing and shouting for joy ; the narrow brook where he could dive and swim whenever he liked. He thought of the band of boy companions over whom he was despot ; and, above all, thoughts of even that tyrant mother of his, who had such a prejudice against him, filled his mind day and night. A kind of physical love like that of animals, a longing to be in the presence of the loved one, an inexpressible wistfulness during absence, a silent cry of the inmost heart for the mother, like the lowing of a calf in the twilight,—this love, which was almost an animal instinct, stirred the heart of this shy, nervous, thin, uncouth and ugly boy. No one could understand it, but it preyed upon his mind continually.

There was no more backward boy in the whole school than Phatik. He gaped and remained silent when the teacher asked him a question, and like an overladen ass patiently suffered the many thrashings that were meted out to him. When other boys were out at play, he stood wistfully by the window and gazed at the roofs of the distant houses. And if by chance he espied children playing on the open terrace of a roof, his heart would ache with longing.

One day he summoned up all his courage and asked his uncle: 'Uncle, when can I go home?'

His uncle answered: 'Wait till the holidays come.

But the holidays would not come till October and there was still a long time to wait.

One day Phatik lost his lesson book. Even with the help of books he had found it very difficult to prepare his lesson. But, now, it became impossible. Day after day the teacher caned him unmercifully. He became so abjectly miserable that even his cousins

were ashamed to own him. They began to jeer and insult him more than even the other boys did. At last he went to his aunt and told her that he had lost his book.

With an expression of the greatest contempt she burst out: 'You great, clumsy, country lout! How can I afford to buy you new books five times a month, when I have my own family to look after?'

That night, on his way back from school, Phatik had a bad headache and a shivering-fit. He felt that he was going to have an attack of malaria. His one great fear was that he might be a nuisance to his aunt.

The next morning Phatik was nowhere to be seen. Search in the neighbourhood proved futile. The rain had been pouring in torrents all night, and those who went out to look for the boy were drenched to the skin. At last Bishamber asked the police to help him.

At nightfall a police van stopped at the door of the house. It was still raining and the streets were flooded. Two constables carried Phatik out in their arms and placed him before Bishamber. He was wet through from head to foot, covered with mud, while his face and eyes were flushed with fever and his limbs were trembling. Bishamber carried him in his arms and took him inside the house. When his wife saw him she exclaimed: 'What a heap of trouble this boy has given us! Hadn't you better send him home?'

Phatik heard her words and sobbed aloud: 'Uncle, I was just going home; but they dragged me back again.'

The fever rapidly increased, and throughout the night the boy was delirious. Bishamber brought in a

doctor. Phatik opened his eyes, and looking up to the ceiling said vacantly: 'Uncle, have the holidays come yet?'

Bishamber wiped the tears from his eyes and took Phatik's thin burning hands in his own and sat by his side through the night. Again the boy began to mutter, till at last his voice rose almost to a shriek: 'Mother!' he cried, 'don't beat me like that. . . . Mother! I *am* telling the truth!'

The next day Phatik for a short time became conscious. His eyes wandered round the room, as if he expected some one to come. At last, with an air of disappointment, his head sank back on the pillow. With a deep sigh he turned his face to the wall.

Bishamber read his thoughts, and bending down his head whispered: 'Phatik, I have sent for your mother.'

The day dragged on. The doctor said in a troubled voice that the boy's condition was very critical.

Phatik began to cry out: 'By the mark—three fathoms. By the mark—four fathoms. By the mark——.' Many times had he heard the sailors on the river steamers calling out the mark on the leadline. Now he was himself plumbing an unfathomable sea.

Later in the day Phatik's mother burst into the room like a whirlwind, and rocking herself to and fro from side to side began to moan and cry.

Bishamber tried to calm her, but she flung herself on the bed, and cried: 'Phatik, my darling, my darling.'

Phatik stopped his restless movements for a moment. His hands ceased beating up and down. He said: 'Eh?'

The mother cried again: 'Phatik, my darling, my darling.'

Very slowly Phatik's eyes wandered, but he could no longer see the people round his bed. At last he murmured: 'Mother, the holidays have come.'

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING :

Stories from Tagore ; Mashi and other Stories ; Hungry Stones and Other Stories ; The Home and the World.

A. E. W. MASON

THE EBONY BOX

A. E. W. Mason is a famous British novelist and short story writer. He was educated at Oxford and was Liberal M. P. for Coventry for four years. His publications include *The Four Feathers*, *Running Water*, *The Broken Road*, *The House of the Arrow*, *No Other Tiger*, *The Three Gentlemen*, *The Sapphire*, *Fire over England*, *Königsmark*, *The Life of Francis Drake*, *Musk and Amber*. He excels both in plot construction and characterization. Mason died in 1948.

‘No, no,’ said Colonel von Altrock, abruptly. ‘It is not always true.’

The conversation died away at once, and every one about that dinner table in the Rue St. Florentin looked at him expectantly. He played nervously with the stem of his wineglass for a few moments, as though the complete silence distressed him. Then he resumed with a more diffident air :

‘War no doubt inspires noble actions and brings out great qualities in men from whom you expected nothing. But there is another side to it which becomes apparent, not at once, but after a few months of campaigning. Your nerves get overstrained, fatigue and danger tell their tale. You lose your manners, sometimes you degenerate into a brute. I happen to know. Thirty years have passed since the siege of Paris, yet even today there is no part of my life which I regret so much as the hours between eleven and twelve o’clock of Christmas night in the year ’70. I will tell you about it if you like, although the story may make us late for the opera.’

The opera to be played that evening was 'Faust', which most had heard, and the rest could hear when they would. On the other hand Colonel von Altrock was habitually a silent man. The offer which he made now he was not likely to repeat. It was due, as his companions understood, to the accident that this night was the first which he had spent in Paris since the days of the great siege.

'It will not matter if we are a little late,' said his hostess, the Baroness Hammerstein, and her guests agreed with her.

'It is permitted to smoke?' asked the Colonel. For a moment the flame of a match lit up and exaggerated the hollows and the lines upon his lean rugged face. Then, drawing his chair to the table, he told his story.

I was a Herr leutenant of the fifth company of the second battalion of the 103rd Regiment, which belonged to the 23rd Infantry Division. It is as well to be exact. That division was part of the 12th Army Corps under the Crown Prince of Saxony, and in the month of December formed the south-eastern segment of our circle about Paris. On Christmas night I happened to be on duty at a forepost in advance of Noisy-le-Grand. The centigrade thermometer was down to twelve degrees below zero, and our little wooden hut with the sloping roof, which served us at once as kitchen, mess-room, and dormitory, seemed to us all a comfortable shelter. Outside its door the country glimmered away into darkness, a white silent plain of snow. Inside, the camp-bedsteads were neatly ranged along the wall where the roof was lowest. A long table covered with a white cloth—for we were luxurious on Christmas night—occupied the middle of the floor. A huge fire

blazed up the chimney, chairs of any style, from a Louis Quatorze fauteuil borrowed from the *salon* of a chateau to the wooden bench of a farm-house, were placed about the table, and in a corner stood a fine big barrel of Bavarian beer which had arrived that morning as a Christmas present from my mother at Leipzig. We were none of us anxious to turn out into the bitter cold, I can tell you. But we were not colonels in those days, and while the Hauptmann was proposing my mother's health the door was thrust open and an orderly muffled up to the eyes stood on the threshold at the salute.

'The Herr Oberst wishes to see the Herr Leutnant von Altrock,' said he, and before I had time even to grumble he turned on his heels and marched away.

I took down my great-coat, drew the cape over my head, and went out of the hut. There was no wind, nor was the snow falling, but the cold was terrible, and to me who had come straight from the noise of my companions the night seemed unnaturally still. I plodded away through the darkness. Behind me in the hut the Hauptmann struck up a song, and the words came to me quite clearly and very plaintively across the snow:

'Ich hatt' einen Kameraden,
Einen bessern findst du nit.'¹

I wondered whether in the morning, like that comrade, I should be a man to be mentioned in the past tense. For more than once a sentinel had been found frozen dead at his post, and I foresaw a long night's work before me. My Colonel had acquired a habit of choosing me for special services, and indeed to his

¹ I had a friend, no better could you find.

kindness in this respect I owed my commission. For you must understand that I was a student at Heidelberg when the newsboys came running down the streets one evening in July with the telegram that M. Benedetti had left Ems. I joined the army as a volunteer, and I fought in the ranks at Gravelotte. However, I felt no gratitude to my Colonel that Christmas night as I tramped up the slope of Noisy-le-Grand to the chateau where he had his quarters.

I found him sitting at a little table drawn close to the fire in a bare, dimly-lighted room. A lamp stood on the table, and he was peering at a crumpled scrap of paper and smoothing out its creases. So engrossed was he, indeed, in his scrutiny that it was some minutes before he raised his head and saw me waiting for his commands.

'Leutnant von Altrock,' he said, 'you must ride to Raincy.'

Raincy was only five miles distant, as the crow flies. Yes, but the French had made a sortie on the 21st, they had pushed back our lines, and they now held Ville Evrart and Maison Blanche between Raincy and Noisy-le-Grand. I should have to make a circuit; my five miles became ten. I did not like the prospect at all. I liked it still less when the Colonel added:

'You must be careful. More than one German soldier has of late been killed upon that road. There are *francs-tireurs* about, and you *must* reach Raincy.'

It was a verbal message which he gave me, and I was to deliver it in person to the commandant of the battery at Raincy. It bore its fruit upon the 27th, when the cross-fire from Raincy and Noisy-le-Grand destroyed the new French fort upon Mount Avron in a snow-storm.

'There is a horse ready for you at the stables, said the Colonel, and with a nod he turned again to his scrap of paper. I saluted and walked to the door. As my hand was on the knob he called me back.

'What do you make of it?' he asked, holding the paper out to me. 'It was picked out of the Marne in a sealed wine-bottle.'

I took the paper and saw that a single sentence was written upon it in a round and laborious hand with the words mis-spelt. The meaning of the sentence seemed simple enough. It was apparently a message from a M. Bonnet to his son in the Mobiles at Paris, and it stated that the big black sow had a litter of fifteen.

'What do you make of it?' repeated the Colonel.

'Why, that M. Bonnet's black sow has farrowed fifteen,' said I.

I handed the paper back. The Colonel looked at it again, shrugged his shoulders, and laughed.

'Well, after all, perhaps it does mean no more than that,' said he.

But for the Colonel's suspicions I should not have given another thought to that mis-spelt scrawl. M. Bonnet was probably some little farmer engrossed in his pigs and cows, who thought that no message could be more consoling to his son locked up in Paris than this great news about the black sow. The Colonel's anxiety, however, fixed it for a while in my mind.

The wildest rumours were flying about our camp at that time, as I think will always happen when you have a large body of men living under a great strain of cold and privation and peril. They perplexed the seasoned officers and they were readily swallowed by

the youngsters, of whom I was one. Now, this scrap of paper happened to fit in with the rumour which most of all exercised our imaginations.

It was known that in spite of all our precautions news was continually leaking into Paris which we did not think it good for the Parisians to have. What we did think good for them—information, for instance, of the defeat of the Army of the Loire—we ourselves sent in without delay. But we ascertained from our prisoners that Paris was enlightened with extraordinary rapidity upon other matters which we wished to keep to ourselves. On that very Christmas Day they already knew that General Faidherbe, at Pont Noyelles, had repulsed a portion of our first army under General Manteuffel. How did they know? We were not satisfied that pigeons and balloons completely explained the mystery. No, we believed that the news passed somewhere through our lines on the south-east of Paris. There was supposed to exist a regular system like the underground road in the Southern States of America during the slavery days. There the escaped slave was quickly and secretly passed on from appointed house to appointed house, until he reached freedom. Here it was news in cipher which was passed on and on to a house close to our lines, whence, as occasion served, it was carried into Paris.

That was the rumour. There may have been truth in it, or it may have been entirely false. But, at all events, it had just the necessary element of fancy to appeal to the imagination of a very young man, and as I walked to the stables and mounted the horse which the Colonel had lent me, I kept wondering whether this message, so simple in appearance, had travelled along that underground road and was covering its last stage

between the undiscovered chateau and Paris in the sealed wine-bottle. . I tried to make out what the black sow stood for in the cipher, and whose identity was concealed under the pseudonym of M. Bonnet. So I rode down the slope of Noisy-le-Grand.

But at the bottom of the slope these speculations passed entirely from my mind. In front, hidden away in the darkness, lay the dangers of Ville Evrart and Maison Blanche. German soldiers had ridden along this path and had not returned ; the *francs-tireurs* were abroad. Yet I must reach Raincy. Moreover, in my own mind, I was equally convinced that I must return. I saw the little beds against the wall of the hut under the sloping roof. I rode warily, determined to sleep in one of them that night, determined to keep my life if it could be kept. I believe I should have pistolled my dearest friend without a tinge of remorse had he tried to delay me for a second. Three months of campaigning, in a word, had told their tale.

I crossed the Marne and turned off the road into a forest path. Ville Evrart with its French garrison lay now upon my left behind the screen of trees. Fortunately there was no moon that night, and a mist hung in the air. The snow, too, deadened the sound of my horse's hoofs. But I rode, nevertheless, very gently and with every sense alert. Each moment I expected the challenge of a sentinel in French. From any of the bushes which I passed I might suddenly see the spurt of flame from a *franc-tireur's* *chassepot*. If a twig snapped in the frost at my side I was very sure the foot of an enemy was treading there.

I came to the end of the wood and rode on to Chesnay. Here the country was more open, and I had passed Ville Evrart. But I did not feel any greater

security. I was possessed with a sort of rage to get my business done and live—yes, at all costs *live*. A mile beyond Chesnay I came to cross-roads, and within the angle which the two roads made a little cabin stood upon a plot of grass. I was in doubt which road to take. The cabin was all dark, and riding up to the door I hammered upon it with the butt of my pistol. It was not immediately opened. There must indeed have been some delay, since the inmates were evidently in bed. But I was not in any mood to show consideration. I wanted to get on—to get on and live. A little window was within my reach. I dashed the butt of the pistol violently through the glass.

‘Will that waken you, eh?’ I cried, and almost before I had finished I heard a shuffling footstep in the passage and the door was opened. A poor old peasant-woman, crippled with rheumatism, stood in the doorway shading a lighted candle with a gnarled, trembling hand. In her haste to obey she had merely thrown a petticoat over the shoulders of her nightdress, and there she stood with bare feet, shivering in the cold, an old bent woman of eighty, and apologised.

‘I am sorry, monsieur,’ she said, meekly. ‘But I cannot move as quickly as I could when I was young. How can I serve monsieur?’

Not a word of reproach about her broken window. You would think that the hardest man must have felt some remorse. I merely broke in upon her apologies with a rough demand for information.

‘The road upon your right leads to Chelles, monsieur,’ she answered. That upon your left to Raincy.’

I rode off without another word. It is not a pretty description which I am giving to you, but it is a true

one. That is my regret—it is a true one. I forgot the old peasant woman the moment I had passed the cabin. I thought only of the long avenues of trees which stretched across that flat country, and which could hide whole companies of *francs-tireurs*. I strained my eyes forwards. I listened for the sound of voices. But the first voice which I heard spoke in my own tongue.

It was the voice of a sentry on the outposts of Raincy, and I could have climbed down from my saddle and hugged him to my heart. Instead, I sat impassively in my saddle and gave him the countersign. I was conducted to the quarters of the commandant of artillery and I delivered my message.

‘You have come quickly,’ he said. ‘What road did you take?’

‘That of Chesnay and Gagny.’

The commandant looked queerly at me.

‘Did you?’ said he. ‘You are lucky. You will return by Montfermeil and Chelles, Leutnant von Altrock, and I will send an escort with you. Apparently we are better informed at Raincy than you are at Noisy-le-Grand.’

‘I knew there was danger, sir,’ I replied.

A regiment of dragoons was quartered at Raincy, and from it two privates and a corporal were given me for escort. In the company of these men I started back by the longer road in the rear of our lines. And it was a quarter to ten when I started. For I noticed the time of a clock in the commandant’s quarters. I should think that it must have taken three-quarters of an hour to reach Montfermeil, for the snow was deep here and the mist very thick. Beyond Montfermeil, however, we came to higher ground there were fewer drifts of snow, and the night began to clear, so that we

made better going. We were now, of course, behind our lines, and the only risk we ran was that of a few peasants armed with rifles from a battlefield, or a small band of *francs-tireurs* might be lurking on the chance of picking off a straggler. But that risk was not very great now that there were four of us. I rode therefore with an easier mind, and the first thing which entered my thoughts was—what do you think? The old peasant-woman's cabin with the broken window? Not a bit of it. No, it was M. Bonnet's black sow. Had M. Bonnet's sow farrowed fifteen? Or was that litter of fifteen intended to inform the people in Paris by some system of multiplication of the exact number of recruits which had joined one of the French armies still in the field—say, General Faidherbe's at Bapaume, and so to keep up their spirits and prolong the siege? I was still puzzling over this problem when in a most solitary place I came suddenly upon a chateau with lighted windows. This was the Chateau Villetaneuse. I reined in my horse and stopped. My escort halted behind me. It was after all an astonishing sight. There were many chateaux about Paris then, as there are now, but not one that I had ever come across was inhabited by more than a caretaker. The owners had long since fled. Breached walls, trampled gardens, gaping roofs, and silence and desertion—that is what we meant when we spoke of a chateau near Paris in those days. But here was one with lighted windows on the first and second stories staring out calmly on the snow as though never a Prussian soldier had crossed the Rhine. A thick clump of trees sheltered it behind, and it faced the eastern side of the long ridge of Mont Guichet, along the foot of which I rode—the side farthest from Paris. From the spot where I

and my escort had halted an open park stretched level to the door. The house had, no doubt, a very home-like look on that cold night. It should have spoken to me, no doubt, of the well-ordered family life and the gentle occupations of women. But I was thinking of M. Bonnet's black sow. I was certain that none of our officers were quartered there and making the best of their Christmas night in France. Had that been the case, black paths and ruts would have been trampled in the snow up to the door, and before now I should have been challenged by a sentinel. No! The more I looked at the house and its lighted windows, the more I thought of M. Bonnet's sow. Was this solitary chateau the undiscovered last station on the underground road through which the news passed into Paris? If not, why was it still inhabited? Why did the lights blaze out upon the snow so late?

I commanded my escort to be silent. We rode across the park, and half-way to the door we came upon a wire fence and a gate. There we dismounted, and walked our horses. We tethered them to a tree about twenty yards from the house. I ordered one of my dragoons to go round the house, and watch any door which he might find at the back. I told the other two to stay where they were, and I advanced alone to the steps, but before I had reached them the front door was thrown open, and a girl with a lantern in her hand came out.

She held the lantern high above her head and peered forward, so that the light fell full upon her hair, her face, and dress. She was a tall girl and slight of figure, with big, dark eyes and a face pretty and made for laughter. It was very pale now, however, and the brows were drawn together in a frown. She wore

a white evening frock, which glistened in the lantern light, and over her bare shoulders she had flung a heavy, black, military cloak. So she stood and swung the lantern slowly from side to side as she stared into the darkness, while the lights and shadows chased each other swiftly across her white frock, her anxious face, and the waves of her fair hair.

'Whom do you expect at this hour, mademoiselle?' I asked.

I was quite close to her, but she had not seen me, for I stood at the bottom of the steps and she was looking out over my head. Yet she did not start or utter any cry. Only the lantern rattled in her hand. Then she stood quite still for a moment or two, and afterwards lowered her arm until the light shone upon me.

'You are Prussian?' she said.

'A lieutenant of foot,' I answered. 'You have nothing to fear.'

'I am not afraid,' she replied, quietly.

'Yet you tremble, mademoiselle. Your hand shakes.'

'That is the cold,' said she.

'Whom did you expect?'

'No one,' she replied. 'I thought that I heard the rattle of iron as though a horse moved and a stirrup rang. It is lonely here since our neighbours have fled. I came out to see.'

'The lantern then was not a signal, mademoiselle?' I asked.

She looked at me in perplexity, and certainly the little piece of acting, I thought, was very well done. Many a man might have been taken in by it. But it was thrown away upon me, for I had noticed that heavy military cloak. How did it come to lie so conveniently to her hand in the hall?

'A signal?' she repeated. 'To whom?'

'To some man hiding in the woods of Mont Guichet, a signal to him that he may come and fetch the news for Paris that has lately—very lately—been brought to the house.'

She bent forward and peered down at me, drawing the cloak closer about her neck.

'You are under some strange mistake, monsieur,' she said. 'No news for Paris has been brought to this house by anyone.'

'Indeed?' I answered. 'And is that so?' Then I stretched out my hand and said triumphantly: 'You will tell me perhaps that the cloak upon your shoulders is a woman's cloak.'

And she laughed! It was humiliating; it is always humiliating to a young man not to be taken seriously, isn't it—especially if he is a conqueror? There was I thinking that I had fairly cross-examined her into a trap, and she laughed indulgently. Of course, a girl always claims the right to be ever so much older than a man of her own age, but she stood on the top of the steps and laughed down at me as though she had the advantage of as many years as there were steps between us. And she explained indulgently, too.

'The cloak I am wearing belongs to a wounded French officer who was taken prisoner and released upon parole. He is now in our house.'

'Then I think I will make his acquaintance,' I said, and over my shoulder I called to the corporal. As he advanced to my side a look of alarm came into the girl's face.

'You are not alone,' she said, and suddenly her face became wistful and her voice began to plead. 'You have not come for him? He has done no harm. He

could not, even if he would. And he would not, for he has given his parole. Oh, you are not going to take him away?’

‘That we shall see, mademoiselle.’

I left one dragoon at the door. I ordered the corporal to wait in the hall, and I followed the girl up the stairs to the first floor. All her pride had gone; she led the way with a submission of manner which seemed to me only a fresh effort to quiet my suspicions. But they were not quieted. I distrusted her; I believed that I had under my fingers the proof of that rumour which flew about our camp. She stopped at a door, and as she turned the handle she said:

‘This is my own parlour, monsieur. We all use it now, for it is warmer than the others, and all our servants but one have fled.’

It was a pretty room, and cheery enough to a young man who came into it from the darkness and the snow. A piano stood open in a corner with a rug thrown upon it to protect the strings from the cold; books lay upon the tables, heavy curtains were drawn close over the windows, there were cushioned sofas and deep arm-chairs, and a good fire of logs blazed upon the hearth. These details I took in at once. Then I looked at the occupants. A youth lay stretched upon a sofa close to the fire with a wrap covering his legs. The wrap was raised by a cradle to keep off its weight. His face must have been, I think, unusually handsome, when he had his health; at the moment it was so worn and pale, and the eyes were so sunk, that all its beauty had gone. The pallor was accentuated by a small black moustache he wore and his black hair. He lay with his head supported upon a pillow, and was

playing a game of chess with an old lady who sat at a little table by his side. This old lady was actually making a move as I entered the room, for as she turned and stared at me she was holding a chessman in her hand. I advanced to the fire and warmed my hands at it.

'You, sir, are the wounded officer on parole?' I said in French. The officer bowed.

'And you, madame?' I asked of the old lady. The sight of my uniform seemed to have paralysed her with terror. She sat still holding the chessman in her hand, and staring at me with her mouth half-open.

'Come, come, madame,' I explained, impatiently; 'it is a simple question.'

'Monsieur, you frighten her,' said the young lady. 'It is my aunt, the Baroness Granville.'

'You tell me nothing of yourself,' I said to her, and she looked at me in surprise.

'Since you have come with an escort to this house I imagined you must know to whom it belonged. I am Sophie de Villeteuse.'

'Exactly,' I replied, as though I had known all along, and had merely asked the question to see whether she would speak the truth. 'Now, mademoiselle, will you please explain to me how it is that while your neighbours have fled you remain at your chateau?'

'It is quite simple,' she answered. 'My mother is bedridden. She could not be moved. She could not be left alone.'

'You will pardon me,' said I, 'if I test the statement.'

The wounded officer raised himself upon his elbow as though to protest, but Mademoiselle de Villeteuse put out a hand and checked him. She showed me a face flushed with anger, but she spoke quite quietly.

'I will myself take you to my mother's room.

I laughed. I said : 'That is just what I expected. You will take me to your mother's room and leave your friends here to make any little preparations in the way of burning awkward letters which they may think desirable. Thank you, no! I am not so easily caught.'

Mademoiselle Sophie was becoming irritated.

'There are no awkward letters!' she exclaimed.

'That statement, too, I shall put to the test.'

I went to the door, and standing so that I could still keep an eye upon the room, I called the corporal.

'You will search the house thoroughly,' I said, 'and quickly. Bring me word how many people you find in it. You, mademoiselle, will remain in the room with us.'

She shrugged her shoulders as I closed the door and came back into the room.

'You were wounded, monsieur,' I said to the Frenchman. 'Where?'

'In the sortie on Le Bourget.

'And you came here the moment you were released on your parole?'

The wounded officer turned with a smile to Mademoiselle Sophie.

'Yes, for here live my best friends.'

He took her hand, and with a Frenchman's grace he raised it to his lips and kissed it. And I was suddenly made acquainted with the relationship in which these two, youth and maid, stood to one another. Mademoiselle Sophie had cried out on the steps against the possibility that I might have come to claim my prisoner. But though she spoke no word, she was still more explicit now. With the officer that caress was plainly no more than a pretty way of saying thanks ; it had

the look of a habit, it was so neatly given, and he gave it without carelessness, it is true, but without warmth. She, however, received it very differently. He did not see, because his head was bent above her hand, but I did.

I saw the look of pain in her face, the slight contraction of her shoulders and arms, as if to meet a blow. The kiss hurt her—no, not the kiss, but the finished grace with which it was given, the proof, in a word, that it was a way of saying 'Thanks'—and nothing more. Here was a woman who loved and a man who did not love, and the woman knew. So much was evident to me who looked on, but when the officer raised his head there was nothing for him to see, and upon her lips only the conventional remark :

'We should have been hurt if you had not come.'

I resumed my questions :

'Your doctor, monsieur, is in the house?'

'At this hour? No.'

'Ah. That is a pity.'

The young man lifted his head from his pillow and looked me over from head to foot with a stare of disdain.

'I do not quite understand. You doubt my word, monsieur?'

'Why not?' I asked sharply.

It was quite possible that the cradle, this rug across his legs, the pillow, were all pretences. Many a soldier in those days was pale and worn and had sunken eyes, and yet was sound of limb and could do a day's work of twenty-four hours if there were need. I had my theory and as yet I had come upon nothing to disprove it. This young officer might very well have brought in a cipher message to the Chateau Villeta-

neuse. Mademoiselle Sophie might very well have waved her lantern at the door to summon a fresh messenger.

'No ; why should I not doubt your word?' I repeated.

He turned his face to the old lady. 'It is your move, Baronne,' he said, and she placed the piece she held upon a square of the board. Mademoiselle Sophie took her stand by the table between the players, and the game went on just as though there were no intruder in the room. It was uncomfortable for me. I shifted my feet. I tried to appear at my ease ; finally I sat down in a chair. They took no notice of me whatever. But that I felt hot upon a discovery, but that I knew if I could bring back to Noisy-le-Grand proof of where the leakage through our lines occurred, I should earn approval and perhaps promotion, I should very deeply have regretted my entrance into the Chateau Villetaneuse. And I was extremely glad when at last the corporal opened the door. He had searched the house—he had found no one but Madame de Villetaneuse and an old servant who was watching by her bed.

'Very well,' said I, and the corporal returned to the hall.

Mademoiselle Sophie moved away from the chess-table. She came and stood opposite to me, and though her face was still, her eyes were hard with anger.

'And now perhaps you will tell me to what I owe your visit?' she said.

'Certainly,' I returned. I fixed my eyes on her, and I said slowly, 'I have come to ask for more news of M. Bonnet's black sow.'

Mademoiselle Sophie stared as if she were not sure whether I was mad or drunk, but was very sure I was

one or the other. The young Frenchman started upon his couch, with the veins swelling upon his forehead and a flushed face.

'This is an insult,' he cried savagely, and no less savagely I answered him.

'Hold your tongue!' I cried. 'You forget too often that though you are on parole you are still a prisoner.'

He fell back upon the sofa with a groan of pain, and the girl hurried to his side.

'Your leg hurts you. You should not have moved,' she cried.

'It is nothing,' he said faintly.

Meanwhile I had been looking about the room for a box or a case where the cipher messages might be hid. I saw nothing of the kind. Of course they might be hidden between the pages of a book. I went from table to table, taking them by the boards and shaking the leaves. Not a scrap of paper tumbled out. There was another door in the room besides that which led on to the landing.

'Mademoiselle, what room is that?' I asked.

'My bedroom,' she answered, simply, and with a gesture full of dignity she threw open the door.

I carried the mud and snow and the grime of a camp without a scruple of remorse into that neat and pretty chamber. Mademoiselle Sophie followed me as I searched wardrobe and drawer and box. At last I came to one drawer in her dressing-table which was locked. I tried the handle again to make sure. Yes, it was locked. I looked suddenly at the young lady. She was watching me out of the corners of her eyes with a peculiar intentness. I felt at once that I was hot.

'Open that drawer, mademoiselle,' I said.

'It contains only some private things.'

'Open that drawer or I burst it open.

'No,' she cried, as I jerked the handle. 'I will open it.'

She fetched the key out of another drawer which was unlocked, and fitted it into the lock of the dressing-table. And all the while I saw that she was watching me. She meant to play me some trick, I was certain. So I watched too, and I did well to watch. She turned the key, opened the drawer, and then snatched out something with extraordinary rapidity and ran as hard as she could to the door—not the door through which we had entered, but a second door which gave on to the passage. She ran very fast and she ran very lightly, and she did not stumble over a chair as I did in pursuit of her. But she had to unlatch the door and pull it open. I caught her up and closed my arms about her. It was a little, carved, ebony box which she held, the very thing for which I searched.

'I thought so,' I cried with a laugh. 'Drop the box, mademoiselle. Drop it on the floor!'

The noise of our struggle had been heard in the next room. The Baroness rushed through the doorway.

'What has happened?' she cried. 'Mon Dieu! you are killing her!'

'Drop the box, mademoiselle!'

And as I spoke she threw it away. She threw it through the doorway; she tried to throw it over the banisters of the stairs, but my arms were about hers, and it fell into the passage just beyond the door. I darted from her and picked it up. When I returned with it she was taking a gold chain from her neck. At the end of the chain hung a little golden key. This she held out to me.

'Open it here,' she said in a low, eager voice.

The sudden change only increased my suspicions, or rather my conviction that I had now the proof which I needed. A minute ago she was trying as hard as she could to escape with the box, now she was imploring me to open it.

'Why, if you are so eager to show me the contents, did you try to throw it away?' I asked.

'I tried to throw it down into the hall,' she answered.

'My corporal would have picked it up.'

'Oh, what would that matter?' she exclaimed, impatiently. 'You would have opened it in the hall. That was what I wanted. Open it here! At all events open it here!'

The very urgency of her pleading made me determined to refuse the plea.

'No, you have some other ruse, mademoiselle,' said I. 'Perhaps you wish to gain time for your friend in the next room. No, we will return there and open it comfortably by the fire.'

I kept a tight hold upon the box. I shook it. To my delight I felt that there were papers within it. I carried it back to the fireside and sat down on a chair. Mademoiselle Sophie followed me close, and as I fixed the little gold key into the lock she laid her hand very gently upon my arm.

'I beg you not to unlock that box,' she said 'if you do you will bring upon me a great humiliation and upon yourself much remorse. There is nothing there which concerns you. There are just my little secrets. A girl may have secrets, monsieur, which are sacred to her.'

She was standing quite close to me, and her back was towards the French officer and her aunt. They

could not see her face and they could hardly have heard more than a word here and there of what she said. For always she spoke in a low voice, and at times that low voice dropped to a whisper, so that I myself had to watch her lips. I answered her only by turning the key in the lock. She took her hand from my arm and laid it on the lid to hinder me from opening it.

'I wore the key on a chain about my neck, monsieur, she whispered. 'Does that teach you nothing? Even though you are young, does it teach you nothing? I said that if you unlocked that box you would cause me great humiliation, thinking that would be enough to stop you. But I see I must tell you more. Read the letters, monsieur, question me about them, and you will make my life a very lonely one. I think so. I think you will destroy my chance of happiness. You would not wish that, monsieur? It is true that we are enemies, but some day this war will end, and you would not wish to prolong its sufferings beyond the end. Yet you will be doing that, monsieur, if you open that box. You would be sorry afterwards when you were back at home to know that a girl in France was suffering from a needless act of yours. Yes, you will be sorry if you open that box.'

It seems now almost impossible to me that I could have doubted her sincerity; she spoke with so much simplicity, and so desperate an appeal looked out from her dark eyes. Ever since that Christmas night I can see her quite clearly at will, standing as she stood then—all the sincerity of her which I would not acknowledge, all the appeal which I would not hear; and I see her many times when for my peace I would rather not. Much remorse, she said very wisely, would be the

consequence for me. She was pleading for her pride, and to do that the better she laid her pride aside ; yet she never lost her dignity. She was pleading for her chance of happiness, foreseeing that it was likely to be destroyed, without any reason or any profit to a living being, by a stranger who would the next moment pass out of her life. Yet there was no outcry, and there were no tears. Had it been a trick—I ask the ladies—would there not have been tears?

But I thought it was a trick and a cheap one. She was trying to make me believe that there were love-letters in the box—compromising love-letters. Now I *knew* that there were no love-letters in the box. I had seen the Frenchman's pretty way of saying thanks. I had noticed how the caress hurt her just through what it lacked. He was the friend, you see, and nothing more ; she was the lover and the only lover of the pair. There could be no love-letters in the box unless she had written them herself and kept them. But I did not think she was the girl to do that. There was a dignity about her which would have stopped her pen.

I opened the box accordingly. Mademoiselle Sophie turned away abruptly, and sitting down in a chair shaded her eyes with her hand. I emptied the letters out on to a table, turning the box upside down, and thus the first which I took up and read was the one which lay at the very bottom. As I read it it seemed that every suspicion I had formed was established. She had hinted at love letters, she had spoken of secrets sacred to a girl ; and the letter was not even addressed to her. It was addressed to Madame de Villeteuse ; it was a letter which, if it meant no more than what was implied upon the surface, would have long since

found destruction in the waste-paper basket. For it purported to be merely the acceptance of an invitation to dinner at the town house of Madame de Villetaneuse in the Faubourg St. Germain. It was signed only by a Christian name, 'Armand', and the few sentences which composed the letter explained that M. Armand was a distant kinsman of Madame de Villetaneuse who had just come to Paris to pursue his studies and who, up till now, had no acquaintance with the family.

I looked at Mademoiselle Sophie sternly. 'So all this pother was about a mere invitation to dinner! Once let it be known that M. Armand will dine with Madame de Villetaneuse in the Faubourg St. Germain, and you are humiliated, you lose your chance of happiness, and I, too, shall find myself in good time suffering the pangs of remorse,' and I read the letter slowly aloud to her, word by word.

She returned no answer. She sat with her hand shading her face, and she rocked her head backwards and forwards continually and rather quickly, like a child with a racking headache. Of course, to my mind all that was part of the game. The letter was dated two years back, but the month was December, and, of course, to antedate would be the first precaution.

'Come, mademoiselle,' I said, changing my tone, 'I invite you very seriously to make a clean breast of it. I wish to take no harsh measures with you if I can avoid them. Tell me frankly what news this letter plainly translated gives to General Trochu in Paris.'

'None' she answered.

'Very well,' said I, and I took up the next letter. Ah, M. Armand writes again a week later. It was evidently a good dinner and M. Armand is properly grateful.

The gratitude, indeed, was rather excessive, rather provincial. It was just the effusion which a young man who had not yet learned self-possession might have written on his first introduction to the highest social life of Paris. Certainly the correspondence was very artfully designed. But what did it hide? I puzzled over the question; I took the words and the dates, and it seemed to me that I began to see light. So much stress was laid upon the dinner, that the word must signify some event of importance. The first letter spoke of a dinner in the future. I imagined that it had not been possible to pass this warning into Paris. The second letter mentioned with gratitude that the dinner had been successful. Well, suppose 'dinner' stood for 'engagement'! The letter would refer to the sortie from Paris which pushed back our lines and captured Ville Evrart and Maison Blanche. That seemed likely. Madame de Villetaneuse gave the dinner; General Trochu made the sortie. Then 'Madame de Villetaneuse' stood for 'General Trochu'. Who would be Armand? Why, the French people outside Paris—the provincials! I had the explanation of that provincial expression of gratitude. Ah, no doubt it all seems far-fetched now that we sit quietly about this table. But put yourselves in the thick of war and take twenty years off your lives! Suppose yourselves young and green, eager for advancement, and just off your balance for want of sleep, want of food, want of rest, want of everything, and brutal from the facts of war. There are very few things which would seem far-fetched. It seemed to me that I was deciphering these letters with absolute accuracy. I saw myself promoted to captain, second to the General Staff. M. Armand represented the French people in the

provinces. No doubt they would be grateful for that sortie. The only point which troubled me arose from M. Armand's presence at that dinner-party. Now, the one defect from the French point of view in that sortie on Ville Evrart was that the French outside Paris did not come to General Trochu's help. They were expected, but they did not take part in that dinner-party.

I went on with the letters, hoping to find an explanation there. The third letter was addressed to Mademoiselle de Villetaneuse, who had evidently written to M. Armand on behalf of her mother, inviting him to her box at the Opera. M. Armand regretted that he had not been fortunate enough to call at a time when Mademoiselle was at home, and would look forward to the pleasure of seeing her at the Opera. Was that an apology? I asked myself. An apology for absence at Ville Evrart and a pledge to be present at the next engagement!

'Mademoiselle,' I cried, 'what does the Opera stand for?'

Mademoiselle Sophie laughed disdainfully.

'For music, monsieur, for art, for refinement, for many things you do not understand.'

I sprang up in excitement. What did it matter what she said? M. Armand stood for the Army of the Loire. It was that army which had been expected at Ville Evrart. Here was a pledge that it would be reformed, that it would come to the help of Paris at the next sortie. That was valuable news—it could not but bring recognition to the man who brought evidence of it into the Prussian lines. I hurriedly read through the other letters, quoting a passage here and there, trying to startle Mademoiselle de Villetaneuse

into a confession. But she never changed her attitude, she did not answer a word.

Her conduct was the more aggravating, for I began to get lost among these letters. They were all in the same handwriting ; they were all signed 'Armand', and they seemed to give a picture of the life of a young man in Paris during the two years which preceded the war. They recorded dinner-parties, visits to the theatres, examinations passed, prizes won and lost, receptions, rides in the Bois, and Sunday excursions into the country. All these phrases, these appointments, these meetings, might have particular meanings. But if so, how stupendous a cipher! Besides, how was it that none of these messages had been passed into Paris? Very reluctantly I began to doubt my own conjecture. I read some more letters, and then I suddenly turned back to the earlier ones. I compared them with the later notes. I began to be afraid the correspondence after all was genuine, for the tone of the letters changed and changed so gradually, and yet so clearly, that the greatest literary art could hardly have deliberately composed them. I seemed to witness the actual progress of M. Armand, a hobbledehoy from the provinces losing his awkwardness, acquiring ease and polish in his contact with the refinement of Paris. Gratitude was now expressed without effusion, he was no longer gaping with admiration at the elegance of the women, a knowledge of the world began to show itself in his comments. M. Armand was growing master of himself ; he had gained a facility of style and a felicity of phrase. The last letters had the post-mark of Paris, the first that of Auvergne.

They were genuine, then. And they were not love-letters. I looked at Mademoiselle Sophie with an

increased perplexity. Why did she now sit rocking her head like a child in pain? Why had she so struggled to hinder me from opening them? They recorded a beginning of acquaintanceship and the growth of that into friendship between a young man and a young girl—nothing more. The friendship might eventually end in marriage no doubt if left to itself, but there was not a word of that in the letters. I was still wondering, when the French officer raised himself from his sofa and dragged himself across the room to Mademoiselle Sophie's chair. His left trouser leg had been slit down the side from the knee to the foot and laced lightly so as to make room for a bandage. He supported himself from chair to chair with evident pain, and I could not doubt that his wound was as genuine as the letters.

He bent down and gently took her hand away from her face.

'Sophie,' he said, 'I did not dare to think that you kept this place for me in your thoughts. A little more courage and I should long since have said to you what I say now. I beg your permission to ask Madame de Villeteuse to-morrow for your hand in marriage.'

My house of cards tumbled down in a second. The French officer was M. Armand. With the habit women have of treasuring tokens of the things which have happened, Mademoiselle Sophie had kept all these trifling notes and messages, and had even gathered to them the letters written by him to her mother, so that the story might be complete. But without M. Armand's knowledge; he was not to know; her pride must guard her secret from him. For she was the lover and he only the friend, and she knew it. Even in the little speech which he had just made, there was just too much formality, just too little sincerity of voice. I

understood why she had tried to throw the ebony box down into the hall so that I might open it there—I understood that I had caused her great humiliation. But that was not all there was for me to understand.

In answer to Armand she raised her eyes quietly, and shook her head.

'You wish to spare me shame,' she said, 'and I thank you very much. But it is because of these letters that you spoke. I must think that. I must always think it.'

'No!' he exclaimed.

'But, yes,' she replied, firmly. 'If monsieur had not unlocked that box—I don't know—but some day perhaps—oh, not yet, no, not yet—but some day perhaps you might have come of your own accord and said what you have just said. And I should have been very happy. But now you never must. For you see I shall always think that the letters are prompting you.'

And M. Armand bowed.

I had taken from her her chance of happiness. The friendship between them might have ended in marriage if left to itself. But I had not left it to itself.

'Mademoiselle,' I said, 'I am very sorry.'

She turned her dark eyes on me.

'Monsieur, I warned you. It is too late to be sorry, and as I stood shuffling awkwardly from one foot to the other, she added, gently, 'Will you not go, monsieur?'

I went out of the room, called together my escort, mounted and rode off. It was past midnight now, and the night was clear. But I thought neither of the little beds under the slope of the roof nor of any danger on the road. There might have been a *franc-tireur* behind every tree. I would never have noticed it until one of them had brought me down.

Remorse was heavy upon me. I had behaved without consideration, without chivalry, without any manners at all. I had not been able to distinguish truth when it stared me in the face, or to recognize honesty when it looked out from a young girl's dark eyes. I had behaved, in a word, like the brute six months of war had made of me. I wondered with a vague hope whether after all time might not set matters right between M. Armand and Mademoiselle Sophie. And I wonder now whether it has. But even if I knew that it had, I should always remember that Christmas night of 1870 with acute regret. The only incident, indeed, which I can mention with the slightest satisfaction is this : On the way back to Noisy-le-Grand I came to a point where the road from Chelles crossed the road from Montfermeil. I halted at a little cabin which stood upon a grass-plot within the angle of the roads, and tying up all the money I had on me in a pocket-handkerchief I dropped the handkerchief through a broken window-pane.

The Colonel let the end of his cigar fall upon his plate and pushed back his chair from the table. 'But I see we shall be late for the opera,' he said, as he glanced at the clock.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING :

The Four Feathers ; *Running Water* ; *The Broken Road* , *The House of the Arrow* ; *No other Tiger* ; *The Three Gentlemen* ; *The Sapphire* ; *Fire over England*.

JIM CORBETT

THE CHAMPAWAT MAN-EATER

Colonel Corbett was entrusted by the Government of the United Provinces with the job of shooting man-eaters which had created havoc in the villages of Garhwal and Kumaon. His wide and expert jungle experience enabled him to save many lives and to free these places from the depredations of these wild beasts. Jim Corbett won several prizes from the Government for his excellent work, and in his book, *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*, he has given a vivid and exciting description of his adventures among the foot-hills of the Himalayas in tracking down tigers. These tales of his hunting are true and the book containing them has since become a jungle-classic.

I SPENT the following morning in going round the very extensive fruit orchard and tea garden and in having a bath at the spring, and at about mid-day the Tahsildar, much to my relief, returned safely from Champawat.

I was standing talking to him while looking down a long sloping hill with a village surrounded by cultivated land in the distance, when I saw a man leave the village and start up the hill in our direction. As the man drew nearer I saw he was alternately running and walking, and was quite evidently the bearer of important news. Telling the Tahsildar I would return in a few minutes, I set off at a run down the hill, and when the man saw me coming he sat down to take breath. As soon as I was near enough to hear him he called out, 'Come quickly, sahib, the man-eater has just killed a girl'. 'Sit still,'

I called back, and turning ran up to the bungalow. I passed the news on to the Tahsildar while I was getting a rifle and some cartridges, and asked him to follow me down to the village.

The man who had come for me was one of those exasperating individuals whose legs and tongue cannot function at the same time. When he opened his mouth he stopped dead, and when he started to run his mouth closed ; so telling him to shut his mouth and lead the way, we ran in silence down the hill.

At the village an excited crowd of men, women and children awaited us and, as usually happens on these occasions, all started to talk at the same time. One man was vainly trying to quieten the babel. I led him aside and asked him to tell me what had happened. Pointing to some scattered oak trees on a gentle slope a furlong or so from the village, he said a dozen people were collecting dry sticks under the trees when a tiger suddenly appeared and caught one of their number, a girl sixteen or seventeen years of age. The rest of the party had run back to the village, and as it was known that I was staying at the bungalow a man had immediately been dispatched to inform me.

The wife of the man I was speaking to had been of the party, and she now pointed out the tree, on the shoulder of the hill, under which the girl had been taken. None of the party had looked back to see if the tiger was carrying away its victim and, if so, in which direction it had gone.

Instructing the crowd not to make a noise, and to remain in the village until I returned, I set off in the direction of the tree. The ground here was quite open and it was difficult to conceive how an animal the size of a tiger could have approached twelve people unseen,

and its presence not detected, until attention had been attracted by the choking sound made by the girl.

The spot where the girl had been killed was marked by a pool of blood and near it, and in vivid contrast to the crimson pool, was a broken necklace of brightly coloured blue beads which the girl had been wearing. From this spot the track led up and round the shoulder of the hill.

The track of the tigress was clearly visible. On one side of it were great splashes of blood where the girl's head had hung down, and on the other side the trail of her feet. Half a mile up the hill I found the girl's sari, and on the brow of the hill her skirt. Once again the tigress was carrying a naked woman, but mercifully on this occasion her burden was dead.

On the brow of the hill the track led through a thicket of blackthorn, on the thorns of which long strands of the girl's raven-black hair had caught. Beyond this was a bed of nettles through which the tigress had gone, and I was looking for a way round this obstruction when I heard footsteps behind me. Turning round I saw a man armed with a rifle coming towards me. I asked him why he had followed me when I had left instructions at the village that no one was to leave it. He said the Tahsildar had instructed him to accompany me, and that he was afraid to disobey orders. As he appeared determined to carry out his orders, and to argue the point would have meant the loss of valuable time, I told him to remove the heavy pair of boots he was wearing and, when he had hidden them under a bush, I advised him to keep close to me, and to keep a sharp lookout behind.

I was wearing a very thin pair of stockings, shorts, and a pair of rubber-soled shoes, and as there appeared

to be no way round the nettles I followed the tigress through them—much to my discomfort.

Beyond the nettles the blood trail turned sharply to the left, and went straight down the very steep hill, which was densely clothed with bracken and ringals.¹ A hundred yards down, the blood trail led into a narrow and very steep watercourse, down which the tigress had gone with some difficulty, as could be seen from the dislodged stones and earth. I followed this watercourse for five or six hundred yards, my companion getting more and more agitated the further we went. A dozen times he caught my arm and whispered—in a voice full of tears—that he could hear the tiger, either on one side or the other, or behind us. Half-way down the hill we came on a great pinnacle of rock some thirty feet high, and as the man had by now had all the man-eater hunting he could stand, I told him to climb the rock and remain on it until I returned. Very gladly he went up, and when he straddled the top and signalled to me that he was all right I continued on down the watercourse, which, after skirting round the rock, went straight down for a hundred yards to where it met a deep ravine coming down from the left. At the junction was a small pool, and as I approached it I saw patches of blood on my side of the water.

The tigress had carried the girl straight down to this spot, and my approach had disturbed her at her meal. Splinters of bone were scattered round the deep pug marks into which discoloured water was slowly seeping and at the edge of the pool was an object which had puzzled me as I came down the watercourse, and which I now found was part of a human leg. In all the sub-

¹ Hill bamboos.

sequent years I have hunted man-eaters I have not seen anything as pitiful as that young comely leg—bitten off a little below the knee as clean as though served by the stroke of an axe—out of which the warm blood was trickling.

While looking at the leg I had forgotten all about the tigress until I suddenly felt that I was in great danger. Hurriedly grounding the butt of the rifle I put two fingers on the triggers, raising my head as I did so, and saw a little earth from the fifteen-foot bank in front of me, come rolling down the steep side and plop into the pool. I was new to this game of man-eater hunting or I should not have exposed myself to an attack in the way I had done. My prompt action in pointing the rifle upwards had possibly saved my life, and in stopping her spring, or in turning to get away, the tigress had dislodged the earth from the top of the bank.

The bank was too steep for scrambling, and the only way of getting up was to take it at a run. Going up the watercourse a short distance I sprinted down, took the pool in my stride, and got far enough up the other side to grasp a bush and pull myself on to the bank. A bed of *Strobilanthes*, the bent stalks of which were slowly regaining their upright position, showed where, and how recently, the tigress had passed, and a little further on under an overhanging rock I found where she had left her kill when she came to have a look at me.

Her tracks now—as she carried away the girl—led into a wilderness of rocks, some acres in extent, where the going was both difficult and dangerous. The cracks and chasms between the rocks were masked with ferns and blackberry vines, and a false step, which might

easily have resulted in a broken limb, would have been fatal. Progress under these conditions was of necessity slow, and the tigress was taking advantage of it to continue her meal. A dozen times I found where she had rested, and after each of these rests the blood trail became more distinct.

This was her four hundred and thirty-sixth human kill and she was quite accustomed to being disturbed at her meals by rescue parties, but this, I think, was the first time she had been followed up so persistently and she now began to show her resentment by growling. To appreciate a tiger's growl to the full it is necessary to be situated as I then was—rocks all round with dense vegetation between, and the imperative necessity of testing each footstep to avoid falling headlong into unseen chasms and caves.

I cannot expect you who read this at your fireside to appreciate my feelings at the time. The sound of the growling and the expectation of an attack terrified me at the same time as it gave me hope. If the tigress lost her temper sufficiently to launch an attack, it would not only give me an opportunity of accomplishing the object for which I had come, but it would enable me to get even with her for all the pain and suffering she had caused.

The growling, however, was only a gesture, and, when she found that instead of shooing me off it was bringing me faster on her heels, she abandoned it.

I had now been on her track for over four hours. Though I had repeatedly seen the undergrowth moving I had not seen so much as a hair of her hide, and a glance at the shadows climbing up the opposite hillside warned me it was time to retrace my steps if I was to reach the village before dark.

The late owner of the severed leg was a Hindu, and some portion of her would be needed for the cremation, so as I passed the pool I dug a hole in the bank and buried the leg where it would be safe from the tigress, and could be found when wanted.

My companion on the rock was very relieved to see me. My long absence, and the growling he had heard, had convinced him that the tigress had secured another kill and his difficulty, as he quite frankly admitted, was how he was going to get back to the village alone.

I thought when we were climbing down the water-course that I knew of no more dangerous proceeding than walking in front of a nervous man carrying a loaded gun, but I changed my opinion when on walking behind him he slipped and fell, and I saw where the muzzle of his gun—a converted 450 without a safety catch—was pointing. Since that day—except when accompanied by Ibbotson—I have made it a hard and fast rule to go alone when hunting man-eaters, for if one's companion is unarmed it is difficult to protect him, and if he is armed, it is even more difficult to protect oneself.

Arrived at the crest of the hill, where the man had hidden his boots, I sat down to have a smoke and think out my plans for the morrow.

The tigress would finish what was left of the kill during the night, and would to a certainty lie up among the rocks next day.

On the ground she was on there was very little hope of my being able to stalk her, and if I disturbed her without getting a shot, she would probably leave the locality and I should lose touch with her. A beat therefore was the only thing to do, provided I could raise sufficient men.

I was sitting on the south edge of a great amphitheatre of hills, without a habitation of any kind in sight. A stream entering from the west had fretted its way down, cutting a deep valley right across the amphitheatre. To the east the stream had struck solid rock, and turning north had left the amphitheatre by a narrow gorge.

The hill in front of me, rising to a height of some two thousand feet, was clothed in short grass with a pine tree dotted here and there, and the hill to the east was too precipitous for anything but a ghóoral to negotiate. If I could collect sufficient men to man the entire length of the ridge from the stream to the precipitous hill, and get them to stir up the tigress, her most natural line of retreat would be through the narrow gorge.

Admittedly a very difficult beat, for the steep hillside facing north, on which I had left the tigress, was densely wooded and roughly three-quarters of a mile long and half-a-mile wide ; however, if I could get the beaters to carry out instructions, there was a reasonable chance of my getting a shot.

The Tahsildar was waiting for me at the village. I explained the position to him, and asked him to take immediate steps to collect as many men as he could, and to meet me at the tree where the girl had been killed at ten o'clock the following morning. Promising to do his best, he left for Champawat, while I climbed the hill to the bungalow.

I was up at crack of dawn next morning, and after a substantial meal told my men to pack up and wait for me at Champawat, and went down to have another look at the ground I intended beating. I could find nothing wrong with the plans I had made, and an

hour before my time I was at the spot where I had asked the Tahsildar to meet me.

That he would have a hard time in collecting the men I had no doubt, for the fear of the man-eater had sunk deep into the countryside and more than mild persuasion would be needed to make the men leave the shelter of their homes. At ten o'clock the Tahsildar and one man turned up, and thereafter the men came in twos, and threes, and tens, until by midday two hundred and ninety-eight had collected.

The Tahsildar had let it be known that he would turn a blind eye towards all unlicensed fire-arms, and further that he would provide ammunition where required ; and the weapons that were produced that day would have stocked a museum.

When the men were assembled and had received the ammunition they needed I took them to the brow of the hill where the girl's skirt was lying, and pointing to a pine tree on the opposite hill that had been struck by lightning and stripped of bark, I told them to line themselves up along the ridge and, when they saw me wave a handkerchief from under the pine, those of them who were armed were to fire off their pieces, while the others beat drums, shouted, and rolled down rocks, and that no one was on any account to leave the ridge until I returned and personally collected him. When I was assured that all present had heard and understood my instructions, I set off with the Tahsildar, who said he would be safer with me than with the beaters whose guns would probably burst and cause many casualties.

Making a wide detour I crossed the upper end of the valley, gained the opposite hill, and made my way down to the blasted pine. From here the hill went

steeply down and the Tahsildar, who had on a thin pair of patent leather shoes, said it was impossible for him to go any further. While he was removing his inadequate foot-gear to ease his blisters, the men on the ridge, thinking I had forgotten to give the pre-arranged signal, fired off their guns and set up a great shout. I was still a hundred and fifty yards from the gorge, and that I did not break my neck a dozen times in covering this distance was due to my having been brought up on the hills, and being in consequence as sure-footed as a goat.

As I ran down the hill I noticed that there was a patch of green grass near the mouth of the gorge, and as there was no time to look round for a better place, I sat down in the grass, with my back to the hill down which I had just come. The grass was about two feet high and hid half my body, and if I kept perfectly still there was a good chance of my not being seen. Facing me was the hill that was being beaten, and the gorge that I hoped the tigress would make for was behind my left shoulder.

Pandemonium had broken loose on the ridge. Added to the fusillade of guns was the wild beating of drums and the shouting of hundreds of men, and when the din was at its worst I caught sight of the tigress bounding down a grassy slope between two ravines to my right front, and about three hundred yards away. She had only gone a short distance when the Tahsildar from his position under the pine let off both barrels of his shot-gun. On hearing the shots the tigress whipped round and went straight back the way she had come, and as she disappeared into thick cover I threw up my rifle and sent a despairing bullet after her.

The men on the ridge, hearing the three shots, not unnaturally concluded that the tigress had been killed. They emptied all their guns and gave a final yell, and I was holding my breath and listening for the screams that would herald the tigress's arrival on the ridge, when she suddenly broke cover to my left front and, taking the stream at a bound, came straight for the gorge. The .500 modified cordite rifle, sighted at sea level, shot high at this altitude, and when the tigress stopped dead I thought the bullet had gone over her back, and that she had pulled up on finding her retreat cut off—as a matter of fact I had hit her all right, but a little far back. Lowering her head, she half turned towards me, giving me a beautiful shot at the point of her shoulder at a range of less than thirty yards. She flinched at this second shot but continued, with her ears laid flat and bared teeth, to stand her ground, while I sat with rifle to shoulder trying to think what it would be best for me to do when she charged, for the rifle was empty and I had no more cartridges. Three cartridges were all that I had brought with me, for I never thought I should get a chance of firing more than two shots, and the third cartridge was for—an emergency.

Fortunately the wounded animal most unaccountably decided against a charge. Very slowly she turned, crossed the stream to her right, climbed over some fallen rocks, and found a narrow ledge that went diagonally up and across the face of the precipitous hill to where there was a great flat projecting rock. Where this rock joined the cliff a small bush had found root-hold, and going up to it the tigress started to strip its branches. Throwing caution to the winds I shouted to the Tahsildar to bring me his gun. A long reply

was shouted back, the only word of which I caught was 'feet'. Laying down my rifle I took the hill at a run, grabbed the gun out of the Tahsildar's hands and raced back.

As I approached the stream the tigress left the bush and came out on the projecting rock towards me. When I was within twenty feet of her I raised the gun and found to my horror that there was a gap of about three-eighths of an inch between the barrels and the breech-block. The gun had not burst when both barrels had been fired, and would probably not burst now, but there was danger of being blinded by a blow back. However, the risk would have to be taken, and, aligning the great blob of a bead that did duty as a sight on the tigress's open mouth, I fired. Maybe I bobbed, or maybe the gun was not capable of throwing the cylindrical bullet accurately for twenty feet; anyway, the missile missed the tigress's mouth and struck her on the right paw, from where I removed it later with my finger-nails. Fortunately she was at her last gasp, and the tap on the foot was sufficient to make her lurch forward. She came to rest with her head projecting over the side of the rock.

From the moment the tigress had broken cover in her attempt to get through the gorge I had forgotten the beaters, until I was suddenly reminded of their existence by hearing a shout, from a short distance up the hill, of 'There it is on the rock! Pull it down and let us hack it to bits'. I could not believe my ears when I heard 'hack it to bits', and yet I had heard aright, for others now had caught sight of the tigress and from all over the hillside the shout was being repeated.

The ledge by which the wounded animal had gained the projecting rock was fortunately on the opposite side from the beaters, and was just wide enough to permit my shuffling along it sideways. As I reached the rock and stepped over the tigress—hoping devoutly she was dead for I had not had time to carry out the usual test of pelting her with stones—the men emerged from the forest and came running across the open, brandishing guns, axes, rusty swords, and spears.

At the rock, which was twelve to fourteen feet in height, their advance was checked, for the outer face had been worn smooth by the stream when in spate and afforded no foothold even for their bare toes. The rage of the crowd on seeing their dread enemy was quite understandable, for there was not a man among them who had not suffered at her hands. One man, who appeared demented and was acting as ring-leader, was shouting over and over again as he ran to and fro brandishing a sword, 'This is the *shaitan*¹ that killed my wife and my two sons'. As happens with crowds, the excitement died down as suddenly as it had flared up, and to the credit of the man who had lost his wife and sons be it said that he was the first to lay down his weapon. He came near to the rock and said, 'We were mad, *sahib*, when we saw our enemy, but the madness has now passed, and we ask you and the *Tahsildar sahib* to forgive us.' Extracting the unspent cartridge, I laid the gun across the tigress and hung down by my hands and was assisted to the ground. When I showed the men how I had gained the rock the dead animal was very gently lowered

¹ Devil

and carried to an open spot, where all could crowd round and look at her.

When the tigress had stood on the rock looking down at me I had noticed that there was something wrong with her mouth, and on examining her now I found that the upper and lower canine teeth on the right side of her mouth were broken, the upper one in half, and the lower one right down to the bone. This permanent injury to her teeth—the result of a gun-shot wound—had prevented her from killing her natural prey, and had been the cause of her becoming a man-eater.

The men begged me not to skin the tigress there, and asked me to let them have her until nightfall to carry through their villages, saying that if their women-folk and children did not see her with their own eyes, they would not believe that their dread enemy was dead.

Two saplings were now cut and laid one on either side of the tigress, and with pugrees, waistbands and loincloths she was carefully and very securely lashed to them. When all was ready the saplings were manned and we moved to the foot of the precipitous hill: the men preferred to take the tigress up this hill, on the far side of which their villages lay, to going up the densely wooded hill which they had just beaten. Two human ropes were made by the simple expedient of the man behind taking a firm grip of the waistband, or other portion of clothing, of the man in front of him. When it was considered that the ropes were long and strong enough to stand the strain, they attached themselves to the saplings, and with men on either side to hold the feet of the bearers and give them foothold, the procession moved up the hill, looking for all the

world like an army of ants carrying a beetle up the face of a wall. Behind the main army was a second and a smaller one—the Tahsildar being carried up. Had the ropes broken at any stage of that thousand-foot climb, the casualties would have been appalling, but the rope did not break. The men gained the crest of the hill and set off eastwards, singing on their triumphal march, while the Tahsildar and I turned west and made for Champawat.

Our way lay along the ridge and once again I stood among the blackthorn bushes on the thorns of which long tresses of the girl's hair had caught, and for the last time looked down into the amphitheatre which had been the scene of our recent exploit.

On the way down the hill the beaters had found the head of the unfortunate girl, and a thin column of smoke rising straight up into the still air from the mouth of the gorge showed where the relations were performing the last rites of the Champawat man-eater's last victim, on the very spot on which the man-eater had been shot.

After dinner, while I was standing in the courtyard of the Tahsil, I saw a long procession of pine torches winding its way down the opposite hillside, and presently the chanting of a hill song by a great concourse of men was borne up on the still night air. An hour later, the tigress was laid down at my feet.

It was difficult to skin the animal with so many people crowding round, and to curtail the job I cut the head and paws from the trunk and left them adhering to the skin, to be dealt with later. A police guard was then mounted over the carcass, and next day, when all the people of the country-side were assembled, the trunk, legs and tail of the tigress were cut up into

small pieces and distributed. These pieces of flesh and bone were required for the locket which hill children wear round their necks, and the addition of a piece of tiger to the other potent charms is credited with giving the wearer courage, as well as immunity from the attacks of wild animals. The fingers of the girl which the tigress had swallowed whole were sent to me in spirits by the Tahsildar, and were buried by me in the Naini Tal lake close to the Nandadevi temples.

While I had been skinning the tigress the Tahsildar and his staff, assisted by the Headmen and greybeards of the surrounding villages and merchants of the Champawat bazaar, had been busy drawing up a programme for a great feast and dance for the morrow, at which I was to preside. Round about midnight, when the last of the great throng of men had left with shouts of delight at being able to use roads and village paths that the man-eater had closed for four years, I had a final smoke with the Tahsildar, and telling him that I could not stay any longer and that he would have to take my place at the festivities, my men and I set off on our seventy-five-mile journey, with two days in hand to do it in.

At sunrise I left my men and, with the tigress's skin strapped to the saddle of my horse, rode on ahead to put in a few hours in cleaning the skin at Dabidhura, where I intended spending the night. When passing the hut on the hill at Pali it occurred to me that it would be some little satisfaction to the dumb woman to know that her sister had been avenged, so leaving the horse to browse—he had been bred near the snow-line and could eat anything from oak trees to nettles—I climbed the hill to the hut, and spread out the skin with the head supported on a stone facing the door.

The children of the house had been round-eyed spectators of these proceedings and, hearing me talking to them, their mother, who was inside cooking, came to the door.

I am not going to hazard any theories about shock, and counter-shock, for I know nothing of these matters. All I know is that this woman, who was alleged to have been dumb a twelvemonth and who four days previously had made no attempt to answer my questions, was now running backwards and forwards from the hut to the road calling to her husband and the people in the village to come quickly and see what the sahib had brought. This sudden return of speech appeared greatly to mystify the children, who could not take their eyes off their mother's face.

I rested in the village while a dish of tea was being prepared for me and told the people who thronged round how the man-eater had been killed. An hour later I continued my journey and for half a mile along my way I could hear the shouts of goodwill of the men of Pali.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING :

Man-eaters of Kumaon ; The Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag.

MULK RAJ ANAND

A PAIR OF MUSTACHIOS

Mulk Raj Anand was born in the Punjab, and studied both in India and England. He is one of the most distinguished writers of English among Indians, and his work, mainly fiction, has been highly praised by leading English critics and novelists. Mulk Raj Anand has been profoundly influenced by modern trends in writing in the West, and his novels and stories mainly deal with the realistic portrayal of Indian social problems and low life. In addition to his work as a novelist and short story writer, Mulk Raj Anand has done much to stimulate artistic consciousness in this country, and is himself an art critic of fine distinction.

THERE are various kinds of mustachios worn in my country to mark the boundaries between the various classes of people. Outsiders may think it stupid to lay down, or rather to raise, lines of demarcation of this kind, but we are notorious in the whole world for sticking to our queer old conventions, prides and prejudices, even as the Chinese or the Americans, or, for that matter, the English. At any rate, some people may think it easier and more convenient to wear permanent boundary-lines like mustachios, which only need a smear of grease, to coats, striped trousers and top hats, which constantly need to be laundered and dry cleaned.

And very unique and poetical symbols these mustachios are too! For instance, there is the famous 'lion' moustache, the fearsome upstanding symbol of that great order of resplendent Rajas, Maharajas, Nabobs and English army generals who are so well known for their devotion to duty. Then there is the 'tiger'

moustache—the uncanny, several pointed moustache worn by the unbending, unchanging survivals from the ranks of the feudal gentry, who have nothing left but the pride in their greatness and a few mementoes of past glory, scrolls of honour granted by the former Emperors, a few gold trinkets, heirlooms, and bits of land. Next, there is the ‘goat’ moustache—a rather unsure brand, worn by the *nouveau riche*, the new commercial bourgeoisie and the shopkeeper class who somehow don’t belong. An indifferent, thin little line of a moustache, worn so that its tips can be turned up or down as the occasion demands—a show of power to some coolie or humility to a prosperous client. There is the ‘Charlie Chaplin’ moustache worn by the lower middle class, by clerks and professional men, a kind of half and half affair, deliberately designed as a compromise between the traditional full moustache and the clean shaven Curzon cut of the sahibs and the barristers. There is the ‘sheep’ moustache of the coolies and the lower orders, the ‘mouse’ moustache of the peasants, and so on.

In fact, there are endless styles of mustachios, all appropriate to the wearers and indicative of the various orders, as rigorously adhered to as if they had all been patented by the Government of India or had been sanctioned by special appointment with His Majesty the King or Her Majesty the Queen. Any poaching on the style of one class by members of another is resented, and many recent disorders in my country are interpreted by certain authorities as being indicative of the increasing jealousy with which each class is guarding its rights and privileges with regard to the mark of the mustachio.

Of course, the analysis of the expert is rather too

abstract, and not all human troubles can be traced to this cause, but certainly it is true that the preferences of the people in regard to their mustachios are causing a lot of trouble in our parts. For instance, there was a rumpus in my own village the other day about a pair of mustachios.

It so happened that Seth Ramanand, the grocer and money-lender, who had been doing well out of recent deals in grain, took it into his head to twist the tips of his goat moustache, integral to his order and position in society, so that it looked nearly like a tiger moustache.

Nobody seemed to mind very much, because most of the mouse-moustached peasants in our village are beholden to the *banya*, either because they owe him interest on a loan or an instalment on a mortgage of jewellery or land. Besides, the Seth had been careful enough to twist his moustache so that it seemed nearly, though not quite, like a tiger moustache.

But there lives in the vicinity of our village, in an old dilapidated palace style of a house, a Rajput named Rai Madho Singh, who claims descent from an ancient Hindu family of which the heads were noblemen and councillors in the Court of the hill state of Bilaspur. Rai Madho Singh, a tall, middle-aged man, is a handsome and dignified person, who wears a tiger moustache and remains adorned with the faded remnants of a gold-brocaded waistcoat, but he hasn't even a patch of land left to his name.

Some people, notably the landlord of our village and the money-lender, maliciously say that he is an imposter, and that all his talk about his blue blood is merely the bluff of a rascal. Others, like the priest of the temple, concede that his ancestors were certainly

attached to the Court of Bilaspur—but as sweepers! The landlord, the money-lender and the priest are manifestly jealous of anyone's long ancestry, however, because they have all risen from nothing, and it is obvious from the stately ruins around Rai Madho Singh what grace was once his and his forefathers'. Only Rai Madho Singh's pride is greatly in excess of his present possessions, and he is inordinately jealous of his old privileges and rather foolish and headstrong in safeguarding against vandalism every sacred brick of his tottering house.

Rai Madho Singh happened to go to the money-lender's shop to pawn his wife's gold nose-ring one morning and he noticed the upturning tendency of the hair on Ramanand's upper lip which made the *banya's* goat moustache look like his own tiger moustache.

'Since when have the lentil-eating shopkeepers become noblemen?' he asked surlily, even before he had shown the nose-ring to the *banya*.

'I don't know what you mean, Rai Madho,' Ramanand answered.

'You know what I mean, son of a donkey!' said Madho. 'Look at the way you have turned the tips of your moustache upwards. It almost looks like my tiger moustache. Turn the tips down to the style proper to the goat that you are! Fancy, the airs of the *banyas* nowadays!'

'Oh, Rai Madho, don't get so excited, said the money-lender, who was nothing if he was not amenable, having built up his business on the maxim that the customer is always right.

'I tell you, turn the tip of your moustache down if you value your life!' raged Rai Madho Singh.

'If that is all the trouble, here you are,' said Ramnand, brushing one end of his moustache with his oily hand so that it dropped like a dead fly. 'Come, show me the trinkets. How much do you want for them?'

Now that Rai Madho Singh's pride was appeased, he was like soft wax in the merchant's sure hand. His need, and the need of his family for food, was great, and he humbly accepted the value which the *banya* put on his wife's nose-ring.

But as he was departing after negotiating his business, he noticed that though one end of the *banya's* moustache had come down at his behest, the other end was still up.

'A strange trick you have played on me, you low fellow,' Madho said.

'I have paid you the best value of your trinket, Rai Madho, that any money-lender will pay in these parts,' the *banya* said, 'especially in these days when the *Sarkars* of the whole world are threatening to go off the gold standard.'

'It has nothing to do with the trinket,' said Madho, bubbling with rage, 'but one end of your moustache is still up like my tiger moustache, though you have brought down the other to your proper goat's style. Bring that other end down also, so that there is no apeing by your moustache of mine.'

'Now, Rai Madho,' replied the *banya*, 'I humbled myself because we were doing business together. You can't expect me to become a mere a worm just because you have pawned a trinket with me. If you were pledging some more expensive jewellery I might consider obliging you a little more. Anyhow, my humble

milk-skimmer doesn't look a bit like your valiant tiger moustache.'

'Bring that tip down!' Rai Madho Singh roared, for the more he had looked at the *banya's* moustache the more the still upturned tip seemed to him like an effort at an imitation of his own.

'Now be sensible, Rai Madho' the money-lender said, waving his hand with an imperturbable calm.

'I tell you turn that tip down or I shall pull you out of your shop and neck you all round the village,' said Madho.

'All right, the next time you come to do business with me I shall bring that tip down,' answered the money-lender cunningly.

'That is fair,' said Chaudri Chottu Ram, the landlord of the village, who was sitting under the tree opposite.

'To be sure! To be sure!' some peasants chimed in sheepishly.

Rai Madho Singh managed to control his impulse of physical violence and walked away. He could not quell his pride, however, the pride of generations of his ancestors who had worn the tiger moustache as a mark of their high position. To see the symbol of honour imitated by a *banya*—this was too much for him. He went home and brought a necklace which had come down to his family through seven generations, and, placing it before the *banya*, said :

'Now will you bring that tip of your moustache down?'

'By all means, Rai Madho, said the *banya*. 'But let us see about this necklace. How much do you want for it?'

'Any price will do, so long as you bring the tip of your moustache down,' answered Madho.

After they had settled the business the money-lender said : 'Now I shall carry out your will.' And he ceremoniously brushed the upturned tip of his moustache down.

As Rai Madho was walking away, however, he noticed that the other tip of the *banya's* moustache had now gone up and stood dubiously like the upturned end of his own exalted tiger moustache. He turned on his feet and shouted :

'I shall kill you if you don't brush that moustache into the shape appropriate to your position as a lentil-eating *banya*!'

'Now, now, Rai Madho, come to your senses. You know it is only the illusion of a tiger's moustache and nowhere like your brave and wonderful adornment,' said the money-lender.

'I tell you I won't have you insulting the insignia of my order!' shouted Madho. 'You bring that tip down!'

'I wouldn't do it even if you pawned all the jewellery you possess to me,' said the money-lender.

'I would rather lose all my remaining worldly possessions, my pots and pans, my clothes, even my house, than see the tip of your moustache turned up like that!' spluttered Madho.

'*Achcha*, if you care so little for all your goods and chattels you sell them to me and then I shall turn that tip of my moustache down,' said the money-lender. And, what is more, I shall keep it flat. Now, is that a bargain?'

'That seems fair enough,' said the landlord from under the trees where he was preparing for a *siesta*.

'But what proof have I that you will keep your

word?' said Madho. 'You oily lentil-eaters never keep your promises.'

'We shall draw up a deed, here and now,' said the money-lender. 'And we shall have it signed by the five elders of the village who are seated under that tree. What more do you want?'

'Now, there is no catch in that,' put in the landlord. 'I and four other elders will come to court as witness on your behalf if the *banya* doesn't keep his moustache to the goat style ever afterwards.'

'I shall excommunicate him from religion if he doesn't keep his word,' added the priest, who, hearing the hubbub, had arrived on the scene.

'*Achcha*', agreed Rai Madho Singh.

He forthwith had a deed prepared by the petition writer of the village, who sat smoking his hubble-bubble under the tree, and this document, transferring all his household goods and chattels, was signed in the presence of the five elders of the village and sealed. The money-lender forthwith brought both tips of his moustache down and kept them glued in the goat style appropriate to his order.

Only as soon as Rai Madho Singh's back was turned he muttered to the peasants seated near-by :

'My father was a sultan.' And they laughed to see Rai Madho Singh, as he walked away, give an extra special flourish to his moustache, maintaining the valiant uprightness of the symbol of his ancient and noble family, even though he had become a pauper in doing it.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Coolie; *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *Untouchable*; *The Machine Wreckers*; *The Sword and the Sickle*.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant, the French writer, is considered by many to be the greatest of all European short story writers, standing alone in grace, wit and charm. In his stories he reveals acquaintance with a very wide world teeming with all sorts and types—peasants, aristocrats, school teachers, clerks, doctors, lovers, children, thieves, murderers, ladies of the middle class, businessmen, lawyers, and persons rich and poor. He takes a detached view of them all. His style conforms consistently to a beautiful standard of simplicity, sometimes almost child-like, but never superficial. Born in 1850, de Maupassant died in 1893, but in the brief course of the forty-three years that he lived he won the reputation of being the greatest short story writer not only of his time, but perhaps of all time.

SHE was one of those pretty and charming girls who, by some freak of destiny, are born into families that have always held subordinate appointments. Possessing neither dowry nor expectations, she had no hope of meeting some man of wealth and distinction, who would understand her, fall in love with her, and wed her. So she consented to marry a small clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly, because she could not afford to be elegant, but she felt as unhappy as if she had married beneath her. Women are dependent neither on caste nor ancestry. With them, beauty, grace and charm take the place of birth and breeding. In their case, natural delicacy, instinctive refinement and adaptability constitute their claims to aristocracy and raise

girls of the lower classes to an equality with the greatest of great ladies. She was eternally restive under the conviction that she had been born to enjoy every refinement and luxury. Depressed by her humble surroundings, the sordid walls of her dwelling, its worn furniture and shabby hangings were a torment to her. Details which another woman of her class would scarcely have noticed, tortured her and filled her with resentment. The sight of her little Breton maid-of-all-work roused in her forlorn repinings and frantic yearnings. She pictured to herself silent antechambers, upholstered with Oriental tapestry, lighted by great bronze standard lamps, while two tall footmen in knee-breeches slumbered in huge arm-chairs, overcome by the oppressive heat from the stove. She dreamed of spacious drawing-rooms with hangings of antique silk, and beautiful tables laden with priceless ornaments; of fragrant and coquettish boudoirs, exquisitely adapted for afternoon chats with intimate friends, men of note and distinction, whose attentions are coveted by every woman.

She would sit down to dinner at the round table, its cloth already three days old, while her husband, seated opposite to her, removed the lid from the soup tureen and exclaimed, 'How splendid! My favourite soup!' But her own thoughts were dallying with the idea of exquisite dinners and shining silver, in rooms whose tapestried walls were gay with antique figures and grotesque birds in fairy forests. She would dream of delicious dishes served on wonderful plate, of soft, whispered nothings, which evoke a sphinx-like smile, while one trifles with the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a plump pullet.

She had no pretty gowns, no jewels, nothing—and

yet she cared for nothing else. She felt that it was for such things as these that she had been born. What joy it would have given her to attract, to charm, to be envied by women, courted by men! She had a wealthy friend, who had been at school at the same convent, but after a time she refused to go and see her, because she suffered so acutely after each visit. She spent whole days in tears of grief, regret, despair and misery.

One evening her husband returned home in triumph with a large envelope in his hand.

'Here is something for you,' he cried.

Hastily she tore open the envelope and drew out a printed card with the following inscription :

'The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame George Ramponneau have the honour to request the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel at an At Home at the Education Office on Monday, January 18th.'

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she flung the invitation irritably on the table, exclaiming :

'What good is that to me?'

'Why, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go anywhere, and this is a really splendid chance for you. I had no end of trouble in getting it. Everybody is trying to get an invitation. It's very select, and only a few invitations are issued to the clerks. You will see all the officials there.'

She looked at him in exasperation, and exclaimed petulantly :

'What do you expect me to wear at a reception like that?'

He had not considered the matter, but he replied hesitatingly :

'Why, that dress you always wear to the theatre seems to me very nice indeed. . . .

He broke off. To his horror and consternation he saw that his wife was in tears. Two large drops were rolling slowly down her cheeks.

'What on earth is the matter?' he gasped.

With a violent effort she controlled her emotion, and drying her wet cheeks said in a calm voice :

'Nothing. Only I haven't a frock, and so I can't go to the reception. Give your invitation to some friend in your office whose wife is better dressed than I am.'

He was greatly distressed.

'Let us talk it over, Matilda. How much do you think a proper frock would cost, something quite simple that might come in useful for other occasions afterwards?'

She considered the matter for a few moments, busy with her calculations, and wondering how large a sum she might venture to name without shocking the little clerk's instincts of economy and provoking a prompt refusal.

'I hardly know,' she said at last, doubtfully, 'but I think I could manage with four hundred francs.'

He turned a little pale. She had named the exact sum that he had saved for buying a gun and making up Sunday shooting parties the following summer with some friends, who were going to shoot larks in the plain of Nanterre

But he replied :

'Very well, I'll give you four hundred francs. But mind you buy a really handsome gown.'

* * * *

The day of the party drew near. But although her

gown was finished, Madame Loisel seemed depressed and dissatisfied.

'What is the matter?' asked her husband one evening. 'You haven't been at all yourself the last three days.'

She answered: 'It vexes me to think that I haven't any jewellery to wear, not even a brooch. I shall feel like a perfect pauper. I would almost rather not go to the party.'

'You can wear some fresh flowers. They are very fashionable this year. For ten francs you can get two or three splendid roses.'

She was not convinced.

'No, there is nothing more humiliating than to have an air of poverty among a crowd of rich women.'

'How silly you are!' exclaimed her husband. 'Why don't you ask your friend, Madame Forestier, to lend you some jewellery? You know her quite well enough for that.'

She uttered a cry of joy.

'Yes, of course, it never occurred to me.'

The next day she paid her friend a visit and explained her predicament.

Madame Forestier went to her wardrobe, took out a large jewel-case and placed it open before her friend.

'Help yourself, my dear.'

Madame Loisel saw some bracelets, a pearl necklace, a Venetian cross exquisitely worked in gold and jewels. She tried on these ornaments in front of the mirror and hesitated, reluctant to take them off and give them back.

'Have you nothing else?' she kept asking.

'O yes, look for yourself. I don't know what you would prefer.'

At length she discovered a black satin-case containing a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with frantic desire. With trembling hands she took it out, fastened it over her high-necked gown, and stood gazing at herself in rapture.

Then in an agony of doubt, she said :

'Will you lend me this? I shouldn't want anything else'

'Yes, certainly.'

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her effusively, and then fled with her treasure.

It was the night of the reception. Madame Loisel's triumph was complete. All smiles and graciousness, in her exquisite gown, she was the prettiest woman in the room. Her head was in a whirl of joy. The men stared at her and inquired her name and begged for an introduction, while the junior staff asked her for waltzes. She even attracted the attention of the minister himself.

Carried away by her enjoyment, glorying in her beauty and her success, she threw herself ecstatically into the dance. She moved as in a beatific dream, wherein were mingled all the homage and admiration she had evoked, all the desires she had kindled, all the complete and perfect triumph so dear to a woman's heart.

It was close on four before she could tear herself away. Ever since midnight her husband had been dozing in a little, deserted drawing-room together with three other men, whose wives were enjoying themselves immensely.

He threw her outdoor wraps round her shoulders—unpretentious, everyday garments, whose shabbiness contrasted strangely with the elegance of her ball dress.

Conscious of the incongruity, she was eager to be gone, in order to escape the notice of the other women in their luxurious furs. Loisel tried to restrain her.

'Wait here while I fetch a cab. You will catch cold outside.'

But she would not listen to him, and hurried down the staircase. They went out into the street, but there was no cab to be seen. They continued their search, vainly hailing drivers, whom they caught sight of in the distance. Shivering with cold and in desperation, they made their way towards the Seine. At last, on the quay, they found one of those old vehicles which are only seen in Paris after nightfall, as if ashamed to display their shabbiness by daylight.

The cab took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and they gloomily climbed the stairs to their dwelling. All was over for her. As for him, he was thinking that he would have to be in the office by ten o'clock.

She took off her wraps in front of the mirror, for the sake of one last glance at herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The diamonds were no longer round her neck.

'What is the matter?' asked her husband, who was already half-undressed.

She turned to him in horror. 'I . . . I . . . have lost Madame Forestier's necklace.'

He started in dismay. 'What? Lost the necklace? Impossible.'

They searched the pleats of the gown, the folds of the cloak and all the pockets, but in vain.

'You are sure you had it on when you came away from the ball?'

'Yes, I remember feeling it in the lobby at the Education Office.'

'But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it drop. It must be in the cab.'

'Yes. I expect it is. Did you take the number?'

'No. Did you?'

'No.'

They gazed at each other, utterly appalled. In the end Loisel put on his clothes again.

'I will go over the ground that we covered on foot and see if I cannot find it.'

He left the house. Lacking the strength to go to bed, unable to think, she collapsed into a chair and remained there in her evening gown, without a fire.

About seven o'clock her husband returned. He had not found the diamonds.

He applied to the police; advertised a reward in the newspapers, made inquiries of all the hackney-cab offices; he visited every place that seemed to hold out a vestige of hope.

His wife waited all day long in the same distracted condition, overwhelmed by this appalling calamity.

Loisel returned home in the evening, pale and hollow-cheeked. His efforts had been in vain.

'You must write to your friend,' he said, 'and tell her that you have broken the catch of the necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to think things over.'

She wrote a letter to his dictation.

* * * *

After a week had elapsed, they gave up all hope. Loisel, who looked five years older, said:

'We must take steps to replace the diamonds.'

On the following day they took the empty case to the

jeweller, whose name was inside the lid. He consulted his books.

'The necklace was not bought here, Madam ; I can only have supplied the case.'

They went from jeweller to jeweller, in an endeavour to find a necklace, exactly like the one they had lost, comparing their recollections. Both of them were ill with grief and despair.

At last in a shop in the Palais Royal they found a diamond necklace, which seemed to them exactly like the other. Its price was forty thousand francs. The jeweller agreed to sell it to them for thirty-six. They begged him not to dispose of it for three days, and they stipulated for the right to sell it back for thirty-four thousand francs, if the original necklace was found before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs left to him by his father. The balance of the sum he proposed to borrow. He raised loans in all quarters, a thousand francs from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave promissory notes, agreed to exorbitant terms, had dealings with usurers, and with all the money-lending hordes. He compromised his whole future, and had to risk his signature, hardly knowing if he would be able to honour it. Overwhelmed by the prospect of future suffering, the black misery which was about to come upon him, the physical privations and moral torments, he went to fetch the new necklace, and laid his thirty-six thousand francs down on the jeweller's counter.

When Madame Loisel brought back the necklace, Madame Forestier said reproachfully :

'You ought to have returned it sooner ; I might have wanted to wear it.'

To Madame Loisel's relief she did not open the case. Supposing she had noticed the exchange, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Perhaps she would have taken her for a thief.

* * * *

Madame Loisel now became acquainted with the horrors of extreme poverty. She made up her mind to it, and played her part heroically. This appalling debt had to be paid, and pay it she would. The maid was dismissed; the flat was given up, and they moved to a garret. She undertook all the rough household work and the odious duties of the kitchen. She washed up after meals and ruined her pink finger-nails scrubbing greasy dishes and saucepans. She washed the linen, the shirts and the dusters, and hung them out on the line to dry. Every morning she carried down the sweepings to the street, and brought up the water, pausing for breath at each landing. Dressed like a working woman, she went with her basket on her arm to the greengrocer, the grocer and the butcher, bargaining, wrangling and fighting for every farthing.

Each month some of the promissory notes had to be redeemed, and others renewed in order to gain time.

Her husband spent his evenings working at some tradesman's accounts, and at night he would often copy papers at five sous a page.

This existence went on for ten years.

At the end of that time they had paid off everything to the last penny, including the usurious rates and the accumulations of interest.

Madame Loisel now looked an old woman. She had become the typical poor man's wife, rough, coarse, hard-bitten. Her hair was neglected, her skirts hung

awry ; and her hands were red. Her voice was no longer gentle, and she washed down the floors vigorously. But now and then, when her husband was at the office, she would sit by the window, and her thoughts would wander back to that far-away evening, the evening of her beauty and her triumph.

What would have been the end of it if she had not lost the necklace? Who could say? Who could say? How strange, how variable are the chances of life! How small a thing can serve to save or ruin you!

One Sunday she went for a stroll in the Champs Elysees, for the sake of relaxation after the week's work, and she caught sight of a lady with a child. She recognized Madame Forestier who looked as young, as pretty, and as attractive as ever. Madame Loisel felt a thrill of emotion. Should she speak to her? Why not? Now that the debt was paid, why should she not tell her the whole story? She went up to her.

'Good morning, Jeanne.'

Her friend did not recognize her and was surprised at being addressed so familiarly by this homely person.

'I am afraid I do not know you—you must have made a mistake,' she said hesitatingly.

'No. I am Matilda Loisel.'

Her friend uttered a cry.

'O my poor, dear Matilda, how you have changed.'

'Yes, I have been through a very hard time since I saw you last ; no end of trouble, and all through you.'

'Through me? What do you mean?'

'You remember the diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the reception at the Education Office?'

'Yes. Well?'

'Well, I lost it.'

'I don't understand ; you brought it back to me.'

'What I brought to you was another one, exactly like it. And for the last ten years we have been paying for it. You will understand that it was not an easy matter for people like us, who hadn't a penny. However, it's all over now. I can't tell you what a relief it is.'

Madame Forestier stopped dead.

'You mean to say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?'

'Yes. And you never noticed it? They were certainly very much alike.'

She smiled with ingenuous pride and satisfaction.

Madame Forestier seized both her hands in great distress.

'O my poor, dear Matilda. Why, mine were only imitation. At the most they were worth five hundred francs!'

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER READING :
Boule de Suif.

NOTES

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

Page 1. *Amontillado* : a wine ; a kind of sherry made at Montilla in Spain.

Page 2. l. 2 *immolation* : killing.

l. 5 *connoisseurship* : critical judgement.

l. 6 *virtuoso* : a person who has a special knowledge of, and a taste for, art of any kind.

l. 13 *vintages* : wines.

l. 16 *Carnival season* : the period of merry-making in Italy. This used to be a week or so before Lent—a period during the Christian year.

l. 18 *motley* : the dress of a fool.

l. 28 *in the middle of the Carnival* : because it is a period of fasting.

Page 3. l. 27 *roquelaire* . man's cloak reaching to knees, worn in the eighteenth century.

l. 28 *palazzo* : mansion.

Page 4. ll. 9-10 *catacombs of the Montresors* : the Montresors were a distinguished family in Italy. Their dead were buried in underground vaults known as 'catacombs'. Wines were very often stored in underground chambers like the catacombs to keep them cool.

Page 5. l. 4 *Medoc* : a French wine.

l. 18 *arms* : the shield or painted device of a nobleman.

l. 23 *Nemo me impune lacessit* (Latin) : no one provokes me with impunity.

l. 28 *puncheons* : large casks which can hold from 70 to 120 gallons of wine.

Page 6. l. 5 *De Grave* : a French wine.

l. 13 *the brotherhood* : the order of the Freemasons. The members met in secret in lodges or clubs

l. 19 *sign* : a secret sign which only the members knew.

l. 29 *crypt* : underground cell or vault.

Page 10. l. 9 *In pace requiescat* (Latin) : may he rest in peace.

SULTAN STORK

Page 11. l. 1 *Scheherazade* : daughter of the Vîzîer of the Persian King Shaharyar. She married the King and by the device of telling him stories, which form the *Arabian Nights*, she managed to escape the doom to which the King's former wives were condemned. Each night she interrupted her tale at some interesting point to continue it the next night.

ll. 2-3 *accustomed signal* : the signal to begin the story.

l. 8 *Omar* : was second Caliph of the Mohammadans. He ruled from A.D. 634-644. He conquered Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt and Palestine.

Page 12. l. 4 *Abrimaniâns* : a dynasty of the ancient Persian kings.

l. 18 *Mushook* : properly speaking 'Mashooq' or beloved.

l. 21 *Ghebirs* : fire-worshippers ; the Parsees.

Page 13. l. 3 *Hafiz* : the celebrated poet of Shiraz (died c. 1380) who in his *ghazals* sang of love, flowers, and nightingales.

1. 30 *mandolin* : musical instrument with four to six metal strings.
- Page 14. 1. 18 *Macassar oil* : a kind of hair oil.
- Page 17. 1. 26 *bastinado* : caning on the soles of the feet.
1. 29 *Sadee* : the famous author of *Gulistan*, or 'Rose-Garden'. He lived in Shiraz, c. 1200, and was a devout Muslim.
- Page 19. 1. 18 *poodle* : a kind of pet dog with long curling hair.
1. 22 *cachinnation* laughing loudly.
- Page 20. 1. 17 *gadding* : going about idly.

THE STOLEN CIGAR CASE

- Page 37. 1. 34 *pub* : public house.
- Page 46. 1. 2 *brougham* : one horse (or electric) closed carriage.

THE HOME-COMING

- Page 48. 1. 3 *unanimously* : from the Latin—*Unus*, one, and *animus*, spirit or mind ; of one mind.
1. 10 *philosopher* : from the Greek *philos*, lover, and *sophia*, wisdom ; lover of wisdom
1. 34 *Furies* : avenging deities.
- Page 54. 1. 6 *lout* . mean, awkward fellow.
- Page 55. 1. 25 *Now he was himself plumbing an unfathomable sea* : now he was himself sounding the immeasurable, incomprehensible sea of life.

THE EBONY BOX

- Page 60. 1. 19 *As the crow flies* : straight.
- Page 63. 1. 1 *chateau* (French) : country house.
1. 3 *cipher* : secret writing.

1. 10 *franc-tireur* (French) : man of irregular light-infantry.
1. 29 *chassepot* (French),: French army breech-loading rifle.

THE CHAMPAWAT MAN-EATER

- Page 88. 1. 6 *exasperating* : irritating
 1. 14 *babel* : meaningless noise; noisy assembly.
- Page 90. 1. 5 *ingals* : hill bamboos.
 11. 28-29 *pug-marks* : marks left by the foot-prints of a beast.
- Page 91. 1. 24 *Strobilanthes* : cones of pines.
- Page 93. 1. 18 *Ibbotson* : was district magistrate at Kanpur for some time and later became Commissioner at Naini Tal. He was an excellent shot and hunter.
 1. 30 *to stalk* : to follow.
- Page 94. 1. 6 *amphitheatre* . properly speaking, it is an oval or circular building, with seats rising behind and above each other round a central open space Here a sort of amphitheatre was made by the surrounding hill ranges.
 1. 11 *ghooral* . a kind of deer.
 1. 16 *gorge* : narrow opening, usually with a stream between hills.
- Page 95. 1. 12 *turn a blind eye* : overlook.
 1. 32 *detour* : roundabout way.
- Page 96. 1. 22 *Pandemonium* : utter confusion.
 1. 23 *fusillade* : continuous discharge of fire-arms.
- Page 97. 1. 6 *broke cover* : came out in the open.
- Page 98. 1. 10 *breech-block* : the mechanism which closes the breech aperture in a gun.
- Page 100. 1. 22 *manned* : carried by men.

- Page 102. l. 11 *greybeards* : elderly and aged people.
 l. 29 *dumb woman* : the woman whose sister had been seized and killed by the tiger in her presence, and who on account of fright had since become dumb.

A PAIR OF MUSTACHIOS

- Page 104. l. 6 *convention* : practice based on long habit.
 l. 16 *resplendent* : brilliant.
- Page 105. l. 3 *feudal gentry* : aristocratic families.
 l. 8 *nouveau riche* (French) : the newly rich.
 l. 9 *bourgeoisie* . the middle class.
 l. 14 *Charlie Chaplin* : the world-renowned comic cinema actor, who wears a peculiar moustache.
 l. 18 *Curzon cut* : the clean-shaven style associated with Lord Curzon.
 l. 20 *orders* : ranks.
- Page 106. l. 5 *rumpus* : an uproar.
 l. 16 *mortgage* : a legal term which means the depositing of any thing as a pledge or security for repayment of money advanced.
 l. 32 *blue blood* : aristocratic descent.
- Page 108. l. 11 *negotiating* : transacting.
 l. 21 *gold standard* : this is a term in economics which refers to the proportion of weight of fine metal and alloy in gold coin. Going off the 'gold standard' would therefore mean that this proportion would no longer be maintained or altogether abolished.
- Page 109. l. 1 *milk-skimmer* : drooping moustache.
- Page 110. l. 17 *insignia* : mark of distinction.
 l. 32 *siesta* : mid-day nap.

Page 111. l. 11 *excommunicate* : to cut off a person from participation in religious and other ceremonies.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

Page 112. l. 2 *freak* : caprice; vagary.

Page 113. l. 9 *Breton* : a native of Brittany, in France.

l. 18 *boudoir* : lady's small private room.

l. 25 *tureen* deep covered dish for holding soup etc. at table.

Page 115. l. 29 *Nanterre* : a town near Paris, noted for cakes and aluminium manufacture.

Page 116. l. 23 *predicament* : difficulty.

Page 117. l. 18 *waltzes* : the waltz is a dance in which partners progress gyrating round each other in embrace. This has now grown out of fashion.

Page 118. l. 11 *Seine* : the famous river on which Paris stands.

ll. 15-16 *Rue des Martyrs* : the Martyr's Street.

Page 120. l. 23 *usurer* : one who lends money at exorbitant interest.

Page 121. l. 10 *garret* : room on top floor.

l. 25 *sou* : a small French coin equal to five centimes.

Page 122 ll. 11-12 *Champs Elysees* : the famous promenade in Paris.

Page 123. l. 14 *ingenuous* : frank; open.

QUESTIONS

GENERAL

1. What are the distinctive qualities of a short story? How does it differ from a novel or a play?
2. What is more important in a short story—characterization or incident or both? Give your reasons.
3. How does the modern short story differ from the ancient tales told in *The Arabian Nights* or a parable by Christ or Buddha?
4. Try to give your own definition of a short story and say how the stories in your book fit in with your definition.
5. Compare the stories by Tagore and Mulk Raj Anand in the book and analyse their distinctive features.
6. It is said that the short story is 'of importance to the student of social conditions, of intellectual movements, and of historical perspective, as well as to the student of literature, pure and simple'. Discuss.
7. Account for the reasons why the short story is so popular to-day.
8. Do you agree with the view that 'the short story. in its use of action is nearer to the drama than to the novel'—*Elizabeth Bowen*?
9. According to Mr H. E Bates 'the evolution of the short story has something to do with the evolution of the general reader'. To what extent do you think the taste of the public has moulded or modified the short story?
10. Which particular story in the book do you prefer and why?

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

1. What kind of atmosphere does Poe weave in the story?
2. Give a character-sketch of Fortunato.
3. How did Montresor succeed in luring Fortunato to the catacombs and there bury him?

SULTAN STORK

1. Narrate the adventures of King Mushook in your own words.
2. Give a short character-sketch of the Princess of Hindostan
3. Do you think in telling the story Thackeray is deliberately being funny?

THE STOLEN CIGAR CASE

1. 'I have given up cigar smoking,' I said. 'Why?' he asked. 'I wish it were mine.'
Do these expressions give any clue to finding out the thief of the cigar case?
2. Who actually stole the cigar case?
3. How did Hemlock Jones find out the thief of the cigar case?

THE HOME-COMING

1. Why is the story entitled 'The Home-coming'?
2. Does the beauty of this story lie in plot or characterization or both?
3. Point out the psychological touches in the story.
4. What is the implied meaning of the expression, 'Mother, the holidays have come'?

QUESTIONS
THE EBONY BOX

1. Give a critical appreciation of the story.
2. Draw the character-sketch of Sophie.
3. 'War dehumanizes man.' Discuss the statement in the light of this story.

THE CHAMPAWAT MAN-EATER

1. Describe how Jim Corbett tracked down the tiger.
2. How was the killing of the tiger celebrated in the village?
3. Describe the final scene when the tiger was killed.

A PAIR OF MUSTACHIOS

1. Describe the various kinds of mustachios worn, according to the author, in this country.
2. Give a character-sketch of Rai Madho Singh.
3. How did the money-lender play on the vanity of Rai Madho Singh? Do you think he was a shrewd fellow?
4. Compare and contrast the characters of Ramanand and Rai Madho Singh.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

1. Give a short character-sketch of Matilda Loisel.
2. How does Loisel compare with his wife?
3. Summarize the story in your own words.

